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The Nation

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EDITORIAL

POLITICS AND BEYOND

The huge rally for Anatoly Shcharansky in the streets of New York, his triumphal reception in the Capitol rotunda, the warm greetings of President Reagan and the enthusiasm of the media upon Shcharansky's arrival in America illustrate the difficulty in distinguishing between the movement for human rights and the politics of national interest. In the heated atmosphere of superpower conflict, it is hard to see the difference between the hero of the struggle for Jewish emigration from the Soviet Union and the captain of ideological battalions in the cold war. In the frenzy, every sincere show of support for the noble cause Shcharansky champions may take on new meaning as a war cry in a contest that is essentially about power, not justice.

The victims of Soviet injustice have not been helped by the periodic exercise of American power in global confrontations. Jewish emigration was proceeding at a satisfactory pace in the days of détente, before Congress enacted the Jackson-Vanik amendment, tying U.S. trade benefits to the Jewish exodus. It is not necessary to glorify Soviet motives to see that the brief liberalization of emigration policy in the early 1970s was a signal of diplomatic cooperation. That signal was misinterpreted, perhaps deliberately, by the hawks in Washington as a sign of weakness, and the Russians responded, petulantly but predictably, by asserting their own power in the old-fashioned way.

Shcharansky was surely right when he said last week that the struggle for justice begins in the public sector. Human rights are too important to be appended to state policy as an ideological afterthought, an opportunity for exploitation or a vehicle for domestic advantage. All nations, and both empires, enter the scene with dirty hands, and their manipulations may cause more suffering for those they choose to help.

CHERNOBYL FALLOUT
Harvey Wasserman

HISTORY WARS
Jon Wiener

DEMOCRACY IN ARGENTINA
Geoffrey Fox

CRIME IN THE GENES
Steven Rose

THOSE WHO CAN'T, TEACH
Herbert Kohl

BRIDGEPORT IN BOTSWANA
George Packer

EL SALVADOR UPDATE

CAN DUARTE LAST TWO MORE YEARS?

MARC COOPER

On June 1, José Napoleón Duarte will mark the second anniversary of his presidency. Not coincidentally, at least two years have elapsed since there has been any significant public debate on U.S. policy in El Salvador.

While Congress chooses up sides for the coming battle over aid to the Nicaraguan *contras*, Democrats are still vying with Republicans to claim political paternity of Duarte's government. Washington has succumbed to the dangerous myth that with Duarte wearing the presidential sash, El Salvador's future is "settled." Democracy is in place, the political center is holding, the army is winning the war, there is no longer a threat of the stretch between Morazán and Chalatenango departments becoming a new Vietnam.

A look at Congress's votes on aid to El Salvador confirms that Duarte's charm still retains its hypnotic quality on Capitol Hill. When the 1986 authorization was voted on last July, some liberal Democrats, fierce critics of the Administration's El Salvador policy in previous years, joined the collapsing opposition to that policy and approved nearly a half-billion dollars for Duarte's regime, 65 percent of which was "war-related." In 1981 and 1982 a majority of the House voted to make military aid conditional on certification of progress in human rights; last year a similar provision elicited an anemic 47 yeas. This year Congress will be asked to hand over another $513 million, representing 50 percent of the Salvadoran national budget, of which an estimated 40 percent goes to the war.

"The 1987 Salvadoran allocation will definitely get cut, maybe by as much as 20 percent," said a

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LETTERS.

DIVESTMENT DILEMMA

Arlington, Va.

The March 1 editorial "Harvard Co-opt" denounces the university's administration for not agreeing to total divestment of its securities in companies with affiliates in South Africa. President Derek Bok and his fellow board members are evidently guilty of the heresy of reformism for retaining stock in those companies adhering to the Sullivan principles (upgrading African employees, desegregating jobs and facilities, pressuring the apartheid government, etc.).

But I am puzzled. Student activists at Harvard and Dartmouth College would have us boycott General Motors, whose plant in Port Elizabeth has been in the vanguard of companies working for change in South Africa. A boycott of G.M. is also advocated by the Herstigte Nasionale Party (H.N.P., one of two right-wing offshoots of the South African National Party) in protest of G.M.'s announced offer to pay the legal expenses of any African arrested for using the white area of the beach at Port Elizabeth, in defiance of the local segregation regulations.

If I should divest from and otherwise boycott General Motors, would I be complying with the demands of American student activists or those of South African reactionaries in the H.N.P., which has been growing in electoral strength as it denounces the Botha government for having started the country on the road to black majority rule?

Of course, if the combined efforts of the boycotters succeed, the dilemma will be short-lived. If G.M. and other companies that abide by the Sullivan principles were to quit South Africa, their properties would be acquired at bargain-basement prices by interests that would be less likely to rock the boat by paying higher wages to their black employees and by threatening discriminatory laws.

Armistead M. Lee

Divestment is not a cure-all for the South African sickness; it is, at the moment, an important method for change in the hands of Americans. But the question of divestment as a means cannot be detached from a consideration of the ends that it is meant to achieve. If Armistead M. Lee, a former U.S. Foreign Service officer, is concerned primarily with maintaining the status quo in South Africa—which may include incremental improvements for some black workers as well as the elimination of certain tokens of "petty apartheid" as undertaken by the Botha government in response to widespread local agitation and increasing foreign protest—then divestment is hardly indicated.

If, on the other hand, Americans want to advance the movement that seeks to overturn the entire "grand apartheid" system and encourage a new political arrangement in South Africa, based on majority rule, equality of citizenship and the elimination of white privilege, then divestment is the uniquely appropriate weapon. If divestment of shareholdings by institutions and individuals leads to the significant withdrawal of the multinational corporate presence in South Africa it could create painful instability, the loss of benefits for those blacks (and whites) who work for U.S.-financed corporations, and perhaps a severe backlash which will hurt those who support its objectives. But even as a simple act of conscience and personal moral witness, divestment strengthens the antiapartheid movement. It is not, once again, a panacea. But it is favored by almost every black leader in South Africa who is working for the destruction of apartheid and, according to a recent poll, by 70 percent of black South Africans. Bishop Desmond Tutu recently risked imprisonment for daring to advocate divestment, for appealing to "the international community to apply punitive sanctions against this government to help us establish a new South Africa." We urge all Americans, whether student activists or stockholders in corporations doing business with Pretoria, to heed his call.

NOT GOOD POLICY

Berkeley, Calif.

"A Trade Policy for the People," by Bill Goold and John Cavanagh [March 29], contains errors that confuse our understanding of changes in the world economy.

First, the authors contend that U.S. multinational corporations are shifting production overseas to take advantage of low wages; in fact, in recent years the United States has become a net capital importer. The United States was able to create 2 million jobs in 1985 despite running the largest trade deficit in history because foreign investors as well as U.S. multinationals invested in this country rather than overseas. Contrary to the authors' assertion, the rest of the world has been exporting jobs to the United States. Were we to stop exporting capital, and foreigners were to do the same, American workers would be worse off, not better.

Second, many Third World countries are no longer appendages of U.S. multinationals. Not only is there more Japanese than U.S. investment in Asia, but nations there are less and less dependent on foreign capital and management skills. They, along with Brazil, have locally owned and managed companies capable of exporting increasingly sophisticated goods to the United States, often in direct competition with U.S. multinationals. The only way to keep out those goods is through trade barriers.

Third, low wages do limit the development of local economies, but Third World workers who produce goods for consumption by rich nations are paid much better than those who produce goods for local consumption. Their wages in turn stimulate domestic production; hence, the spectacular improvement in living standards in South Korea, Taiwan, Singapore and Hong Kong, each of whose prosperity has been export led. By contrast, Third World nations that have sought economic self-sufficiency have done relatively poorly.

Finally, I agree that to help American-made products compete with imports and to create higher paid jobs for American workers, the government needs to provide incentives that encourage both U.S. firms and foreign multinationals to invest in capital-intensive technologies in this country. I wish Goold and Cavanagh would tell us what specific incentives they have in mind.

David Vogel

GOOLD AND CAVANAGH REPLY

Washington

First, in the aggregate the United States is a net capital importer, but certainly not in the manufacturing sector. Capital has been flowing in record amounts to take advantage of interest rates that are higher here than elsewhere in the world. Much of it has gone to finance Federal budget deficits, real estate and banking. Comparatively minuscule amounts have gone into U.S. manufacturing, and the Commerce Department has documented the loss of millions of high-paying U.S. jobs to the global assembly line.

Second, there is a reduced role for U.S.-based multinationals in the newly industrialized countries. Nevertheless, both the multinational and local firms in countries like Taiwan and South Korea gain a substantial trade advantage by systematically repressing their labor forces. Hence, rather than short-term protectionism, an open trading system structured to improve the living standards of workers as well as consumers is needed. Vogel seems to favor driving down the U.S. standard of living toward the lowest common international denominator rather than providing incentives for raising living and working standards, especially in newly industrialized countries, to some minimum level of decency.

Third, Vogel perpetuates a myth of the corporate world. If one considers internationally recognized worker rights (right of association, right to join a union and bargain collectively, freedom from forced or child labor, and acceptable standards for wages, hours and occupational safety and health), it is not true that workers in multinational subsidiaries are generally better off than workers in local firms. Often export processing zones are created in developing countries to entice multinationals to invest in exchange for the systematic denial of the aforementioned worker rights by government decree and practice.

Finally, laws and fiduciary rules should be revised to allow greater investment of huge pension reserves in capital-intensive technologies as well as socially useful enterprises.

Bill Goold and John Cavanagh

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EDITORIALS.

Reform for What?

The tax reform act likely to emerge as a compromise between the Senate and House bills already passed may simplify the process of filing tax returns, but it will complicate the politics of taxation in new and still unexamined ways. The bills have enjoyed an enthusiastic reception so far. Liberals, neoliberals, Reaganites and reactionaries seem to have formed an ad hoc rainbow coalition to back them. Only a few diehards whose oxes are specifically marked for goring, such as developers of luxury real estate and small-venture capitalists, have been heard to grumble. And who in their right mind can gainsay a measure that is beloved by the chair of General Motors and the director of the Citizens for Tax Justice?

It may be more prudent to ask a different question: What good can come of legislation that seems to disregard the inequalities and conflicts in the American political economy? The reform bills promise everything for everybody and something for nothing. For those in the upper brackets they lower the maximum rate by one-third, to about 30 percent. For the average wage-earner they delete confusing lines on the tax forms and raise the personal deduction. For the poor they eliminate filing altogether. Whatever "costs" are involved are to be paid for, in effect, by closing the myriad loopholes and razing the warren of shelters that have been created by Congress over the years.

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Simplification and rationalization of an outrageously unwieldy code are worthy goals, but they draw attention from more pertinent purposes of the legislation, which have been ignored by the press. Consider these:

§ By destroying shelters and giving big breaks to the wealthy, the reforms are supposed to encourage capital investment and thus do what previous tax reductions—the centerpiece of Reaganomics—failed to achieve. Representative Dan Rostenkowski predicted last week that soon "people will be investing their dollars based on good business practices as opposed to hiding it from the government." But the problem of growth may prove more intractable than he and supply-side economists hope. There have been seven successive quarters of very sluggish growth, and whatever good economic numbers Reagan can show for five years of trying can be credited to the huge military buildup, not fiscal finagling. The rich are more apt to take back their sheltered funds and keep their tax reform windfalls to themselves than to make long-term capital investments, especially with the repeal of the investment tax credit.

§ The reforms are meant to strengthen the free market, that magical agora of economic intercourse much frequented by Reaganites. Tax shelters, the investment credit and other loopholes are considered subsidies that restrict market freedom and thus deform the economy. But in modern usage the free market is more a religious symbol than an economic model, and deregulation could cause more problems than it solves, especially when it is selectively practiced. In its bill the Senate has retained oil and gas depletion allowances, a hugely expensive loophole that subsidizes the nation's biggest industry, now fallen on hard times. And removal of the investment credit could spell disaster for the entire system. Only twice in twenty-four years has it been suspended: for four months in 1966, resulting in a mini-recession; and again for two years in Richard Nixon's first term, leading to a major economic crisis.

§ The reforms further weaken—perhaps fatally—the theory of progressivity that has formed the foundation of the tax code since the introduction of the graduated income tax in 1913. The reform act will move the tax structure nearer to a flat rate for rich and poor. It's true that many loopholes are regressive in practice, in that they shift the revenue burden to poorer taxpayers. But the radical reduction of upper-income brackets effectively demolishes the theory of a progressive tax and makes it that much harder to institute redistributive policies in the future. Furthermore, the next, inevitable, tax increase will probably come in the form of a tax on consumption—a national sales tax or a value-added tax—the most regressive kind imaginable.

True tax reform would remove all the regressive loopholes, including special corporate tax rates, and replace them with a genuinely progressive income tax that would flatten the disparities of wealth instead of the percentages paid to the I.R.S. The bills now passed retain much of the present system's inequality and reform only the methods of calculation.

Europe Notebook

Paris

For the Western press the Chernobyl disaster was splendid copy, both sensational and anti-Soviet. Western European newspapers, drawing mostly on U.S. sources, began by speaking of 2,000 dead, stressed the radioactive dangers of the nuclear cloud and damned the Soviet regime for its secrecy. No one should minimize the seriousness of the Chernobyl meltdown or praise Moscow for the absence of a free press, but these same papers did not write with such assured condemnation of the fire at the Windscale nuclear facility in England in 1957 or the near-meltdown at Three Mile Island in 1979. But in their anti-Soviet zeal newspapers that usually know their place dealt an effective, if unintended, blow to the nuclear establishment in their own countries.

This boomerang effect was particularly noticeable in France, which in absolute terms produces more electricity from nuclear reactors than the Soviet Union and leads the world on a per capita basis. By the time the journalists realized that their readers could draw domestic conclusions from the alarming stories about Chernobyl, it was too late. They tried to argue, "It can't happen here," but that was just too ridiculous. A Ukrainian minister said very much the same thing a week before the Chernobyl tragedy. As *The Economist* put it, "Those, like us, who have long championed nuclear power must accept that the debate will never be the same again." The servants of the establishment have made, however unwittingly, a contribution to the anti-nuclear movement.

* * *

The other day we had dinner at a friend's place in Paris. Most of the guests were former Communists, which was not surprising considering ex-C.P. members would make up the biggest political party in France. Among them was a writer famous in the good old Stalinist days for attacking Tito and his fellow "traitors." Now she says she is apolitical.

We learned this when another woman, a well-known historian who also left the party but who has remained politically active, wittily described the confrontations that take place at the monthly reunions of her family, in which is represented every shade of the French left, from Socialists to Communists, orthodox and critical, to the New Left. The ex-Stalinist zealot loudly expressed her astonishment over this survival of political commitment, commenting, "We must be indulgent; after all, I do have friends hooked on other drugs." Many of us were ready to pounce on her past, but she rendered any reply superfluous with a slip of the tongue: "I am now willing to be active for only one cause—*amnésie internationale*." Obviously she meant *amnistie* ("amnesty") and not *amnésie* ("amnesia"). There was a spontaneous burst of laughter and then a moment of awkward and wistful silence. Clearly Freud had a point.

* * *

Vienna 1880–1938, an exhibition devoted to Freud's city, just closed here. An extraordinary collection of painters and musicians, writers and thinkers, over the fifty-eight years

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covered by the show, turned that former imperial capital into the crucible of European culture. The lavish exhibition catalogue bears a strange subtitle, borrowed from Hermann Broch: "The Joyous Apocalypse." Joyous?

Today postapocalyptic Vienna is embracing the results of the first ballot of the Austrian presidential elections, in which Herr Kurt Waldheim missed outright victory by a fraction of a percentage point. Let us beware hypocrisy. In Paris, Arabs, not Jews, are the main victims of racism. Those who turn a blind eye to the racial oppression of Arabs, Pakistanis or blacks lose the moral right to preach not only about anti-Semitism but about the Holocaust itself. The *Anschluss* took place nearly a half-century ago, and one cannot, in biblical fashion, extend the curse to future generations. That said, however, the way in which Waldheim "forgot" the Jewish children of Salonika who were sent to be slaughtered, or the massacre of Yugoslav civilians, the skillful way in which he turned revelations of his war record into an electoral asset, with a majority of the nation not only denying its past but flaunting its oblivion—all this was, to put it mildly, sickening.

A nation as well as an individual may suffer from amnesia, and in both cases it is a serious disease. The horrible past hidden in the recesses of the unconscious weighs on the present and may surge back at any time. For reasons varying from country to country we have not fully settled our accounts with Nazi crimes. In France the mythical syllogism—De Gaulle is France, De Gaulle resisted, ergo France resisted—enabled the people to erase the guilt of collaboration. In Germany the cold war caused the occupying powers to forgive and forget. Austria was sheltered by the persistent legend that it had been the Nazis' first victim. The wretched behavior of the Austrians today is the direct result of this postwar parody of innocence. We are paying for the illusion that opposition to racism can be sporadic and selective. The tongue of the anti-Stalinist lady did not slip: amnesia is international.

DANIEL SINGER

Daniel Singer is The Nation*'s correspondent in Europe.*

Qaddafi's Medal

Recently, the press carried a story that a delegation of well-known black civil rights leaders had awarded a Martin Luther King Jr. "peace medal" to Col. Muammar el-Qaddafi in 1979. The story first appeared in an article by conservative black economist Glenn C. Loury, titled "Behind the Black-Jewish Split," in the January issue of *Commentary*. Discussing the deterioration of relations between blacks and Jews precipitated in 1979 by U.N. ambassador Andrew Young's unauthorized meeting with a P.L.O. representative and his subsequent resignation, Loury wrote:

> Even some blacks could be heard to object when Joseph Lowery, head of Dr. Martin Luther King's Southern Christian Leadership Conference and leader of a delegation which included NAACP President Benjamin Hooks and Georgia State Senator Julian Bond, bestowed on the Libyan dictator Muammar Qaddafi an award of appreciation from American blacks called "The Decoration of Martin Luther King."

The tale of the Qaddafi medal spread. Morris B. Abram, a member of the U.S. Civil Rights Commission who has clashed with black leaders over affirmative action, retold it in the January 17 issue of *USA Today*, observing, "It would have pained this peaceful man [King] to know that . . . Lowery . . . Hooks and . . . Bond . . . bestowed on Libyan master terrorist Muammar Khadafy an award of appreciation they called 'the decoration of Martin Luther King.'" A few days later, in a *New York Times* Op-Ed piece, Albert Vorspan of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations chided Lowery for "defaming the memory of Dr. King when he led a black delegation to Libya to bestow on Muammar el-Qaddafi an award of appreciation he called 'The Decoration of Martin Luther King.'"

Lowery informed *USA Today* that he had never set foot in Libya, and Hooks and Bond voiced similar denials. Loury retracted the charge, saying he got his information from a recently published book, *Jesse Jackson and the Politics of Race*, by Richard Quinn and Thomas Landess, who said they had read a 1979 story about the medal in *The New York Times*. Abram and Vorspan cited *Commentary* as their source and apologized to Lowery, and *U.S.A. Today* and *The Times* Op-Ed page printed corrections.

So what actually happened? After Andrew Young resigned from his U.N. post, three groups of black Americans visited the Middle East. One of them, led by Lowery and Representative Walter Fauntroy, traveled to Lebanon, where its meeting with Yasir Arafat aroused considerable controversy in the United States. The second delegation, led by Jesse Jackson, went to Israel and Jordan. A third, less-publicized mission, allegedly headed by Hosea Williams, then a Georgia State Representative and a former aide to King, journeyed to Libya that September.

Williams was accompanied by almost a score of black academics, clergymen and politicians. While they were there, the official Libyan news agency, Jana, reported that Williams had presented the "decoration of Martin Luther King" to Qaddafi, who in return pledged his support for black Americans' "honorable struggle for the abolition of racial discrimination practiced against them."

After the story was picked up by the U.S. press, Coretta Scott King denied that the medal given to Qaddafi was the Martin Luther King Jr. Non-Violent Peace Prize, which had been conferred on Jimmy Carter, Andrew Young and Cesar Chavez. Many blacks, including *Washington Post* columnist William Raspberry, denounced the presentation of an award to Qaddafi. Nevertheless, American Jews were outraged, and the report damaged black-Jewish relations.

When I talked to Williams three years ago, he told me he had gone to Libya to lobby for jobs for blacks in the oil industry, agriculture and education. He had also tried to arrange a faculty-student exchange between Libyan and black American universities. The trip had been organized by Talmadge Anderson of the black studies program at Wash-

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BEAT THE DEVIL.

The Evil of Banality

It is curious that George Shultz, whose pin-striped person conveys the very essence of dour banality, should have turned out to be the most rabid, indeed demented, of the entire Reagan gang. He is living proof that there is no one more dangerous than a stupid man in the grip of a bad idea. It's not that his predecessor, Alexander Haig, was not similarly obsessed with "terrorism," having made it the keystone of his analysis of world affairs back in 1981. But Haig looked like a crackpot, whereas Shultz evokes soup being brewed on a foggy day in the Highlands, as my father once remarked of Ramsay McDonald's rhetorical style.

Shultz has become all the more dangerous since his discovery that journalists find him attractive and desire to be in his presence, so long as he talks tough in words of one or two syllables. When I first saw the phrase "You've had it, pal" on the front page of the *New York Post*, I assumed it was some imaginative license on the part of Rupert Murdoch's editors and was amazed to find that the *Post* was reporting accurately, presumably because it could not improve on Shultz's message to Col. Muammar el-Qaddafi.

So now we have a Secretary of State who takes his political analysis of the world from the Israeli Embassy (to a degree that caused even Richard B. Straus, a former staff member of the American-Israeli Political Action Committee, to declare in the Outlook section of *The Washington Post* for April 27 that things were getting out of hand) and his concept of international law from Abraham Sofaer, the former judge and current legal adviser to the State Department, who garners his ideas from Morgan the Pirate. There's no telling what the two will hatch up next, with only Caspar Weinberger to hold them in check. Reagan will be no help. Right after Shultz told Qaddafi he'd had it, Reagan told the press that he would not have been unhappy if the bombs dropped on Tripoli had killed the colonel.

This must be one of the most extraordinary confessions ever made in public by an American President, but the press, complicit as dogs, scarcely turned a hair. *The New York Times* printed the President's murderous confidences right next to the menu for the big Tokyo banquet, as though Reagan's remarks had the same consequence for humanity as the lamb dished up by Nakasone's cooks. In avoiding undue emphasis on Reagan's regrets at having failed to assassinate the head of a sovereign state, the press showed that same delicacy of judgment that had led it to refer always to the "apparent death of Qaddafi's adopted daughter" in the Libyan bombing. The suggestion there is that only an autopsy on U.S. soil would be satisfactory, with the added innuendo that because she was an "adopted" girl rather than a "real" boy—the gravity of the wounds of Qaddafi's sons has not been questioned—the deed is somehow reduced to trivial proportions.

The Quality of Hot Air

The ecstasies in the U.S. press over the collective statement on terrorism concocted by the United States and Britain spilled over into the coverage of what the Tokyo summit was supposed to be about: the world economic situation. In *The New York Times* for May 7, Peter T. Kilborn drew an emotional picture of a President once shunned in economic summits but now venerated as a miracle worker. In tones scarcely less worshipful, Kilborn celebrated the wizardry of Treasury Secretary James Baker in persuading the leaders of the other advanced capitalist economies to embark on the path of negotiation rather than confrontation in setting exchange rates.

For a somewhat clearer-eyed view of what happened in Tokyo, one could find in the London *Financial Times* for May 9 this analysis by Anatole Kaletsky:

> The Tokyo summit communique may have promised "close and continuous economic coordination" but, to judge by what the finance ministers were actually saying, the summit should have been held at Babel instead. The Americans wanted the dollar lower; the Japanese wanted the dollar higher. The Americans wanted fiscal expansion, while Germany swore it would never reflate. In fact, there has not been so much international disagreement on economic policy since the Versailles summit of 1982.

Kaletsky's views were shared by most other non-U.S. observers, and this fact raises the question of why most discussion of the economy here is so wide of the mark, so craven to the Administration. You still hear constant talk of the Reagan boom, even though the growth of the economy has been at an effective standstill since halfway through 1984. The preliminary estimate of 3.2 percent growth for the first quarter of 1986 will dissolve into another set of flat statistics. The figure for "final sales" has already dropped, so part of the supposed growth in G.N.P. can be ascribed to a growth in inventory, which is reckoned in the G.N.P. calculations.

But most economic commentators seem to inhale only the aroma of the Dow Jones industrial average, which looked just as ebullient in its rise during the five years preceding the crash of 1929 as it does now. What about some other indicators for the bottom 80 percent of the economic population? David Gordon pointed out in the *Los Angeles Times* for April 15 that one good barometer is the real wage of production and nonsupervisory workers in the private, nonfarm economy. This index dropped slightly between 1983 and 1985 and went down by 6 percent between 1978 and the end of last year. The percentage of G.N.P. going to productive investments in machines and equipment hasn't matched the sales talk of the supply-siders either. You can walk across Manhattan on limo roofs and over-consume Porsches and cocaine in La Jolla, but, adjusting for the vagaries of the business cycle, the G.N.P. "investment share" has not improved. As Gordon says, "Stagnation persists." Hourly productivity in the nonfarm business sector went up only 0.8 percent a year between 1979 and 1985, actually falling from 1984 to 1985. Pwoggies tend to shun talk about productivity, since the word has the connotation of speedups for workers, but its significance here is in terms of capital investment. Gordon says that the 0.8 percent productiv-

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ALEXANDER COCKBURN

ity statistic is "dismal," which is true, but all the same I wish he had not used that word. Leftist economists are addicted to the words "dismal" and "massive." Try "poor" or "hefty." I particularly like the latter, with its semantic penumbra of laconic bulk.

So if even the Reagan counterrevolution, with its massive and dismal boosts in military spending, isn't saving capitalism, what will? The soothsayers point to the decline in energy prices. William Nordhaus wrote an article in *The New York Times* three weeks ago saying this price collapse augured a boom of unprecedented strength. Your view of this depends on whether you were sitting next to an oil rig in Oklahoma or in a sales office of the Chrysler Corporation. Price deflation doesn't necessarily spell good times.

An Ear for an Ear

Representative Charles Wilson's offer of Soviet ears to members of his entourage as they toured near the Afghanistan border, which I mentioned two weeks ago, is solidly within the American tradition, as is the demonization of Colonel Qaddafi, also discussed here recently. I urge anyone appalled by the idiom of the Reagan years to read John W. Dower's excellent book *War Without Mercy: Race and Power in the Pacific War*, published by Pantheon. This is a blood-chilling anatomy of racism and the fomentation of hatred, in which state-sponsored intellectuals played their usual shameful and willing role.

Apropos ears, in April 1943 *The Baltimore Sun* told of a local woman who had petitioned authorities to let her son mail her an ear he had cut off a Japanese soldier. She wanted to nail it to her front door. Dower writes of thousands of Japanese prisoners of war or survivors of submarine sinkings being routinely machine-gunned to death, of bodies looted, gold fillings torn from the living, and the dead exhumed for plunder. On March 15, 1943, *Time* reported that "low-flying fighters turned lifeboats towed by motor barges, and packed with Jap survivors, into bloody sieves." One reader questioned the morality of such "cold-blooded slaughter," provoking outraged letters, including one that said, "Thoroughly enjoyed reading of the 'cold-blooded slaughter.' . . . Another good old American custom I would like to see is nailing a Jap hide on every 'back-house' door in America."

In 1945 the U.S. Office of War Information noted that 84 percent of one group of Japanese prisoners said they had expected to be killed or tortured when taken prisoner. The U.S. analysts commented that their fears were not irrational. Rhetoric at home matched savagery in the field. There was enthusiasm for genocide, with 13 percent of respondents in one 1944 poll wanting to "kill all Japanese," and the chair of the War Manpower Commission, Paul V. McNutt, saying he favored the "extermination of the Japanese in toto." The pathological Admiral Halsey had as his motto, "Kill Japs, kill Japs, kill more Japs."

These were the people who called the Japanese "mad dogs"; 22.7 percent of respondents in a 1945 *Fortune* poll said they wished the United States had had the opportunity to use "many more of them [atomic bombs] before Japan had a chance to surrender." Such people are still with us, grandly represented by Reagan and Shultz, who similarly revel in the use of the phrase "mad dog" and who routinely practice the verbal exterminism, courtesy of the word "terrorist," which translates—for such is their hunger and desire—into physical extermination, whether in the Middle East or Central America.

Blackmail

The uses of "terrorism" as ideological terror are being grimly spelled out here. A candidate in the June election of county supervisors in Sacramento, California, is Grantland Johnson, a progressive City Councilman. Back in 1984 Johnson spoke at a memorial service for the Palestinian refugees killed in the 1982 massacre at Sabra and Shatila. The meeting was organized by the November 29 Coalition.

In April of this year local Jewish leaders said that Johnson had compromised himself by associating with a group that, according to the Anti-Defamation League and AIPAC, had unwholesome ties to bodies like the Association of Arab-American University Graduates and, ultimately, the P.L.O. Johnson's campaign manager, David Townsend, worked up a statement palatable to the Jewish leaders, and he urged Johnson to sign. It expressed Johnson's unequivocal support for Israel and condemnation of terrorism, and concluded, "Let me make it clear that I will not meet with any organization which is aligned or affiliated with the PLO." Townsend said that unless Johnson signed this incredible guarantee he would resign, adding that in the event he failed to sign, Johnson stood in danger of losing his City Council seat. Johnson affirmed Israel's right to exist and condemned terrorism, but he denounced what he called rhetorical terrorism and refused to sign away his right to freedom of political action.

Townsend resigned and Willie Brown, leader of the Democratic majority of the California State Assembly, loaned one of his staff, Richard Ross, to help Johnson through the final weeks of the campaign. Johnson, denied financial backing, is now fighting for his political life. He has received some principled support, including a splendid statement from the Social Concerns Commission of the Catholic diocese of Sacramento, which said:

> Candidate Johnson is being asked to repudiate a speech made at a memorial service for victims of a massacre. What is he to say, that he does not reject the massacre? Raising the issue now of a speech made two years ago is a cynical attempt to seek personal political advantage from the present crisis in the Middle East. . . .
>
> The pressure to blindly follow the Israeli policy without analysis of human rights, moral obligations or the national interest of the USA is strong. . . .
>
> The pressure is applied with an extra strength against Black political figures. . . . they, almost alone, have been willing to reject the over-simplified analysis of the Middle East being pushed by this pressure group.

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CAPITOL LETTER.

KAI BIRD AND MAX HOLLAND

■ Freedom House Journalists

The National Endowment for Democracy (N.E.D.) is another of President Reagan's time machines to take us back to the good old 1950s. The N.E.D. wants to bring back the day when no stigma was attached to the government's efforts to influence foreign journalists and when the C.I.A. directly subsidized individual journalists and magazines, such as Melvin Lasky's *Encounter*. The only difference today is that the government has found a new way to launder its money.

In September 1984 the N.E.D. gave Leonard Sussman's Freedom House, a conservative human rights organization, $200,000 to set up a "network of democratic opinion-leaders . . . to end the isolation of democratic-minded intellectuals and journalists in the Third World who want to participate in democratic discourse with the countries of North America and Western Europe." The idea was to send out copies of "democratic" articles to regional editors on each continent who would encourage their various outlets to reprint the material.

As it turned out, no regional editors were appointed and few of the articles have been reprinted. Sussman makes most of the selections and mails out ten to twelve articles each month to a list of some 350 journalists in fifty countries. Sussman describes the recipients as "prominent people in their own right and certainly in their own countries."

The Exchange, as Sussman calls his service, does have one old hand working on it: none other than Melvin Lasky, who serves as European representative. Lasky, who is not paid, is frequently consulted by telephone and, when in New York City, helps make editorial decisions. According to one of the quarterly reports that Freedom House submits to the N.E.D., Max Kampelman played a leading role in drawing up the list of overseas journalists until he took a leave to become Reagan's arms control negotiator in Geneva. Journalists then received a letter from Zbigniew Brzezinski, who chairs the project, inviting them to join this "international idea circuit."

Nearly all the authors of the articles circulated are neo-conservatives. They include Vladimir Bukovsky, Bernard Levin, André Glucksman, Jean-François Revel, Paul Johnson, Chapman Pincher, George Urban and Lord Beloff. With the exception of a few Eastern European dissidents, such as Polish KOR activist Adam Michnik, not one liberal, let alone left-of-center, writer is part of the Exchange. Most of the publications in the network are also conservative. They include *The Daily Telegraph* of London, *The Times* of London, *The Spectator*, *The Wall Street Journal*, the London *Daily Mail* and the *Daily Gleaner* of Jamaica.

Exchange articles reflect the Reagan Administration's foreign policy agenda exclusively. One of Freedom House's quarterly reports admits that "many West European participants expressed the opinion that the 'current American administration's views' are too prominently displayed." That is hardly surprising. The articles on Nicaragua that were sent out included a pro-*contra* piece by Robert Leiken that had appeared in *The New Republic*, statements by the anti-Sandinista politician Arturo Cruz and an article by Pedro Joaquin Chamorro, former editor of the opposition newspaper *La Prensa*.

The Exchange has also disseminated an attack on "credit-card communists" in Jamaica, an investigation of the "far left in Australia" and a feature on "Western Europe's peace groups' relations with the P.L.O." All the articles on South Africa have argued against disinvestment; among them was a statement from the trustees of Freedom House and an article by Zulu homeland chief Gatsha Buthelezi titled "Disinvestment is Anti-Black."

Articles on Afghanistan, Tibet, Angola, Poland, Grenada ("The Happy Sequel"), Ethiopia, the Ukraine ("KGB Crackdown in the Ukraine") and Cuba have been distributed. The Exchange, however, found nothing fit to print about the popular upheavals in the Philippines and Haiti. "Maybe we just didn't see any fresh writing on Haiti," Sussman commented when asked about the gap.

He apparently found no "fresh writing" on the democratic struggles in South Korea, Taiwan, Pakistan, Egypt, Indonesia and a number of other authoritarian countries friendly to the United States. Nevertheless, Sussman has the chutzpah to claim that his selections show no ideological bias. He points out that the Exchange had distributed the full text of a statement by eleven Chilean opposition parties calling for an end to the Pinochet dictatorship, but that appears to be the only time that critics of a dictatorial regime allied with the United States have been provided a rostrum.

Recently, the N.E.D. gave Freedom House an additional $175,000 to operate the Exchange until the end of the year. A look at Freedom House's expenditures indicates that Sussman is running what is essentially a photocopying and mailing operation. More than $44,000 of last year's $200,000 budget was spent on postage and "communication." Nearly $46,000 went for salaries, benefits and consultative fees; and some $27,000 for rent, utilities and equipment. More than $44,000 was allocated for unspecified "other direct costs." When told of these figures a Congressional aide said: "It looks like a big waste of money. Most of the articles are probably available in American libraries around the world. This serves no purpose but propaganda."

The justification for the Exchange, according to one Freedom House document, is that "the forces bent on undermining democratic thought have well-financed channels through which to operate on a worldwide scale." What the N.E.D. and Freedom House have created is a puny reflection of that mythical monolithic propaganda apparatus. There's no debate among the authors of the Exchange articles and certainly no exchange of ideas. It is merely an outlet for one narrow band of the U.S. political spectrum. Much of the verbiage, particularly on the *contra* issue, blatantly undercuts the House Democratic leadership's position. House Democrats are fools to allow this to happen. This project is one more example of why the N.E.D. experiment should be abandoned.

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ARTICLES.

CHERNOBYL FALLOUT

Time to Dispel The Nuclear Cloud

HARVEY WASSERMAN

Both radioactive and political fallout from the Chernobyl reactor disaster have now soaked deep into the American grass roots. The first radiation was detected at ground level on the West Coast on May 6, eleven days after the meltdown apparently began. Readings were "way, way below" any levels that would indicate danger, said a confident Lee M. Thomas, administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency and head of the Federal task force monitoring the radiation. Indeed, rainwater in Richland, Washington, showed a reading of 500 picocuries per liter of iodine 131, while Federal guidelines call for concern only at a level of 15,000. The official White House line was that despite the irresponsibility of the Russians, there was "no danger to the United States."

A reactor core the size of the one at the Chernobyl unit contains as much as 1,000 times the radiation released at Hiroshima. Forty years later, it remains unclear how many people in Hiroshima were killed by radiation alone, but the number was in the tens of thousands, extending into a third generation. Thus if even a small amount of the radiation from Chernobyl was released into the surrounding populated areas, we can expect thousands to die from it ultimately.

In downwind Europe—particularly in Poland and parts of West Germany, where readings in the days right after the accident were extremely high—the damage will be horrifying. Most serious will be the harm done to fetuses now in utero, infants and small children; and the prime culprit will be iodine 131. Iodine is naturally ingested by the thyroid gland; radioactive iodine emits particles that damage or destroy that gland. I-131 can cross the placenta of pregnant women and travel directly to the thyroids of their fetuses, causing severe problems, including brain damage and respiratory difficulty at birth. This devastating process almost certainly caused the inordinate number of infant deaths in the Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, area after the Three Mile Island accident [see Ernest J. Sternglass, "The First Casualty at T.M.I.," *The Nation*, February 28, 1981, and "The Lethal Path of T.M.I. Fallout," March 7, 1981], and may have been responsible for the abnormally high infant death rate in the United States following atmospheric nuclear testing in Nevada from 1951 to 1963.

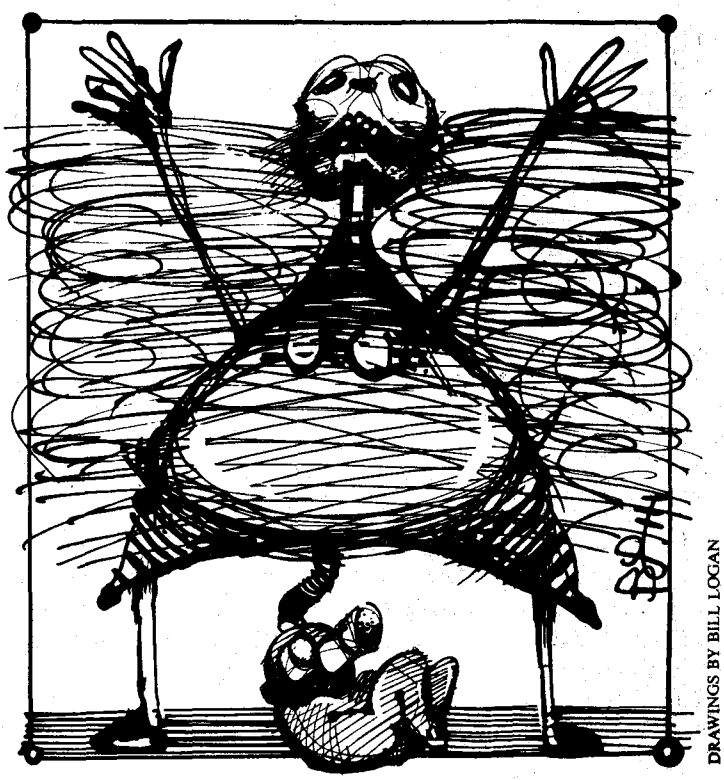
Harvey Wasserman writes frequently about nuclear issues for various publications. He is co-author, with Norman Solomon, Robert Alvarez and Eleanor Walters, of Killing Our Own: The Disaster of America's Experience With Atomic Radiation *(Delacorte/Delta).*

Radiation expert Ernest J. Sternglass warns that damage is possible even at the level of 500 picocuries. "Ever since the early 1960s they have been arbitrarily raising limits on 'acceptable dose,'" he told me. "Those 500 picocuries could destroy the thyroid of a developing fetus or small infant . . . [and that] does not take into account the other fallout elements, such as strontium, plutonium and so on."

One generally accepted protective measure is oral ingestion of potassium iodide. By satiating the thyroid's natural need for iodine, the chemical prevents the absorption of the radioactive iodine, which then passes through the body. In some areas the sale of potassium iodide is limited to prescriptions; some substitutes may actually be dangerous, so caution is required. Washing fruit and vegetables, drinking bottled water and keeping children and pregnant women indoors when contaminated rain is falling may also help.

A few of the deadly isotopes carried by the cloud are cobalt 60, strontium 90, xenon 133, cesium 137 and plutonium 239, all of which can cause cancer, leukemia and other lethal diseases over a period of days, weeks or years. The wide range of other heavy metals in the Chernobyl fallout indicates that pieces of the reactor structure itself may have disintegrated and been blown out into the atmosphere. If so, the fallout cloud will carry an even more terrifying burden of death.

A listing of the specific damage done by each element would take pages and would do little good. Research by Alice Stewart and others at Hiroshima has confirmed that exposure to radiation can break down the body's immune system, causing many victims to die of noncancerous diseases, such as pneumonia and tuberculosis, before the



DRAWINGS BY BILL LOGAN

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cancers have time to form. Elsewhere, Sternglass and others have attributed a variety of ailments—from crib death to AIDS—to the effects of bomb fallout and other human-made pollutants. There is much debate in the scientific community about what radiation does to the human body, but as the 1980 Encyclopedia Britannica puts it, "It can be concluded that there is no 'safe' level of radiation exposure, and no dose set so low that the risk is zero."

Despite the burden of evidence to the contrary, White House press secretary Larry Speakes rushed to tell reporters soon after news of the meltdown spread that "we understand there is no danger to the United States."

Speakes's ill-founded assurance conformed to the government's longstanding practice of glossing over the dangers of radiation. During the era of atmospheric testing, U.S. officials issued similar assurances. But thousands of citizens living in areas of Nevada, Utah and northern Arizona close to the test site contracted cancers, leukemia and other radiation-related diseases, and a number of them have brought suit against the Federal government. In some cases tens of thousands of farm animals, particularly sheep, died after especially "dirty" tests, and those losses also prompted multimillion-dollar lawsuits.

In March 1979, Metropolitan Edison, the owner of the Three Mile Island nuclear reactor, tried in every possible way to cover up the extent of T.M.I.'s radiation releases—so much so that seven years later Pennsylvania's Republican Governor, Richard Thornburgh, would compare their behavior to that of Mikhail Gorbachev during the Chernobyl crisis.

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At the time of the T.M.I. near-meltdown, however, Thornburgh's Secretary of Health, Gordon MacLeod, warned that pregnant women and small children should be immediately evacuated from the reactor area, and that potassium iodide should be distributed to area residents. But Thornburgh was unwilling to "create a panic" by ordering an immediate evacuation. It was not until two days after the accident that he did so, and by then it was too late to avoid the worst of the health hazards.

MacLeod was later fired for being an "alarmist." Since his departure the state's Department of Health has scoffed at studies by Sternglass and others indicating that the infant death rate in the Harrisburg area had tripled in the months after the accident. More recent research by Jane Lee has shown that the cancer rate in certain areas downwind of the site is five times what would have been expected if the accident had not occurred. Such studies have also been given short shrift by state authorities.

An example of the Reagan Administration's schizoid response to Chernobyl could be found in its statements that such a catastrophe could not happen in the United States, with its technologically superior nuclear facilities—that the accident was caused by Soviet backwardness. If that is true, why has the Administration not canceled its proposed sales of reactors to Third World countries including China, which has expressed interest in as many as eight reactors?

While lecturing the Russians about their international responsibilities and criticizing their failure to disclose all the details of the accident, the Reaganites said nothing of the role the United Nations and other world bodies might play in such situations. That is not surprising, since the Administration favors a nationalistic, rather than a multilateral, approach. In fairness, it should be added that the organization's International Atomic Energy Agency as now constituted is incapable of giving the Russians or anyone else much help. "We are purely advisory," chanted the I.A.E.A.'s James Daglish. "All we can do is advise." According to Robert Pollard of the Union of Concerned Scientists, "The main disadvantage of the I.A.E.A. is that it creates the appearance of some sort of protection, and that's largely undeserved."

Despite the Administration's attempts to play down the dangers of nuclear power, Chernobyl has cast a cloud over the already troubled U.S. reactor industry. Republican Senator Alan Simpson of Wyoming, a vehement proponent of nuclear energy, rushed to the industry's defense, saying: "Drawing parallels with our reactors and the Soviet reactors is a thin and wretched distortion. That kind of unfortunate and pernicious dealing isn't going to fly to any thoughtful observer of the commercial nuclear power scene."

Urgent questions have nonetheless been raised about the 101 commercial reactors currently licensed in the United States and the remaining 29 under construction. One commercial reactor, Fort St. Vrain, in Platteville, Colorado, is very similar to the one at Chernobyl. Eight American weapons-production and research reactors—one at Hanford, Washington, which has a graphite-moderated core like Chernobyl's; four near Aiken, South Carolina; two near

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Oak Ridge, Tennessee; and one near Idaho Falls, Idaho—operate without airtight containment domes.

An NBC/*Wall Street Journal* poll conducted shortly after the Chernobyl accident showed that 65 percent of the American public opposed building new nuclear plants, with only 27 percent in favor—the highest opposition since the T.M.I. accident. An ABC News poll showed that roughly 40 percent of the populace was "somewhat" or "very worried" about the local health effects of the Chernobyl cloud. Some 60 percent were "not worried at all." If, as the sample suggests, two-fifths of all Americans are troubled, official attempts to minimize the potential dangers have not been successful. "Chernobyl will likely make safety the overriding issue [in nuclear power] again," *The Wall Street Journal* concluded on May 1. L. David Freeman, head of the Lower Colorado River Authority, told CBS News: "The Three Mile Island accident resulted in the fact that no sane capitalist will invest in these nuclear reactors with the design that we have, and now we find that no communist will invest in them either—and that doesn't leave very many other people."

The political fallout from Chernobyl also poses a threat to the Reagan Administration's strategic investment in a limited nuclear war-fighting capability. If a fallout cloud from a reactor meltdown near Kiev can threaten public health in this country within two weeks, what would be the effect of the fallout from nuclear weapons detonated in the Soviet Union? In a limited nuclear exchange, the radiation casualties would be far higher than previously imagined, and even in a "successful" first strike they could be so massive as to eliminate any advantage for the aggressor.

The strategic problems spill over to Reagan's Star Wars system. Its claimed high-tech capability to zap missiles in space depends on the huge reactors that power the laser weaponry. Some of those reactors would be stationed on earth but some—or so the fantasy has it—would be in orbit. The potential ramifications of a meltdown in the outer atmosphere are staggering.

The immediate fallout damage will be to the Administration's single-minded campaign for nuclear power. Indeed, Chernobyl may have dealt the industry a lethal blow, and it will certainly give the arguments of antinuclear activists added weight. The Soviet government's admission that there was a thirty-six-hour delay in evacuating people from the area—this in a rural area—should convince those Long Islanders who are still on the fence about the Shoreham plant that evacuation from that heavily populated area would be impossible [see Karl Grossman, "Staging Lilco's Nuclear Follies," *The Nation*, February 22].

That argument holds for Seabrook, New Hampshire, where the first mass antireactor protest began a decade ago. Seabrook Unit 1 has been slated to open as early as this fall, but Chernobyl has given the Clamshell Alliance and its supporters renewed hope of stopping it. Massachusetts Governor Michael Dukakis, who must approve evacuation plans for the towns in his state within a ten-mile radius of Seabrook, now says Chernobyl has made him rethink the problem.

Resistance is also building at the Perry plant, forty miles east of Cleveland, which until last January had seemed set

The Neo-Conservatives Don't Speak for the Jews.

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for an uneventful opening. Then an earthquake occurred only ten miles away, energizing the local opposition.

The long-range impact of Chernobyl on the nuclear industry remains to be seen, but its effect on the disarmament process in the short run can be only negative. By hushing up the accident, Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev undermined his carefully cultivated image as a peacemaker. Both he and the Reaganites seem to be ignoring the most important lesson of Chernobyl: the planet is too small for the use of nuclear fission, either for war or for energy. □

HISTORY WARS

Why the Right Is Losing in Academe

JON WIENER

The attention focused on Accuracy in Academia has obscured a more significant siege on radical scholarship mounted recently by neoconservatives who believe they can do a better job fighting the academic left. The problem with A.I.A., Midge Decter wrote in a recent *New York Times* Op-Ed article, is that its attack comes from "outside the university"; A.I.A. head Reed Irvine should leave the fighting to the insiders, to conservative professors who can criticize radical scholarship in the name of upholding standards and defending the university from the intrusion of politics.

The field of history has become a great battleground. Part of the intellectual legacy of the 1960s was the rise of social history, examining the experience of workers, blacks and women, their struggles for equality and the obstacles they encountered, and the decline of traditional political and diplomatic history, which focus on leaders and their policies.

Neocons favor the latter approach, but they have criticized the new social history on political as well as scholarly grounds. One of the most prominent early proponents of social history, Princeton University historian Lawrence Stone, came under fire last June in a lengthy article in *The New Criterion* by Norman Cantor, a newcomer among the neocons. A medievalist at New York University, Cantor purported to prove that Stone "is an English Marxist." He declared that because of Stone's "peddling" the "pure Marxist line in historiography," Princeton has become "a central school for indoctrination of the young in Marxist ideology." The evidence includes Stone's defense in *The Nation* of David Abraham, the Marxist historian who has been assailed, allegedly for the errors in his book on Weimar Germany [see Wiener, "Footnotes to History," February 16, 1985].

Cantor's blast drew chuckles from historians across the political spectrum because Stone is widely known as a liberal. He has been willing to work with Marxist students, but he's best known for a 1979 essay in which he expressed his antagonism to Marxist history, calling for a "return to narrative." Eric Hobsbawm, a real English Marxist, rejected that idea at a symposium last fall at the New School for Social Research: "The first item on the agenda of radical history is to resist this return to the historical *stone* age."

As a political historian, Cantor might well oppose the social history Stone has written and encouraged, but that doesn't explain his Red-baiting. That probably had something to do with a 1968 *New York Review of Books* article in which Stone criticized Cantor's book *The English: A History of Politics and Society to 1760*, an old-fashioned constitutional history. "The book is clearly not about the English, not about how they lived and died, . . . not about their thoughts, beliefs, and superstitions, not about their social structure or social mobility," Stone declared. "It is scarcely credible that a historian would even attempt such a thing in the mid-twentieth century." Moreover, Stone pointed out, the book's preface suggested that a graduate student of Cantor's had assembled the text from Cantor's lecture notes. Cantor waited eighteen years before striking back. By doing so, he was able to make use of a forum—the neocon journal of combat—that barely existed in 1968, or indeed in 1978, and that enabled him to give his personal pique a political veneer.

Princeton historian Robert Darnton objects to Cantor's use of "Marxist historian" as an epithet. In a letter to the editor that *The New Criterion*'s Hilton Kramer published, he correctly termed Cantor's charge "a revival of McCarthyism." He added in an interview: "Marxists as well as non-Marxists have a place within academic communities. Liberalism includes the right to hear the other side. In claiming to defend liberalism, Cantor is in fact betraying it."

Several leading conservative scholars have denounced Kramer for publishing Cantor's absurd attack on Stone. Gertrude Himmelfarb, professor of history at the City University of New York, wrote that the Cantor piece "unwittingly distracts attention" from the real Marxists. J.H. Hexter, head of the Center for the History of Freedom at Washington University in St. Louis and a vigorous polemicist against the academic left, declared that in reaction to the political radicalism of the 1960s, "I began a slow quiet crawl to the right—and there I find Norman Cantor. Guess I'll start crawling back."

Despite this criticism, Kramer is unrepentant. Asked whether Cantor made a mistake in calling Stone a Marxist, Kramer replied, "Absolutely not." In the magazine's March issue the editors explain that Cantor "did not accuse Stone of being a traitor either to his native country or to his adopted one" (Stone was relieved to learn that). They criticized Himmelfarb's letter for failing to trace the connection between Marxism and social history, and instructed her to "find an opportunity to explore this important subject on some future occasion."

If Kramer read magazines besides his own, he would know that Himmelfarb has already done that. In the February 10 issue of *The New Republic* she wrote a lengthy attack on British Marxist historians. In a 1984 article for *Harper's*

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on the relationship between Marxism and social history, she lamented that the Marxist view that political conflicts express social and economic differences "has so penetrated the culture that it might well be said, 'We are all Marxists now.'" Not quite all: Himmelfarb argues that history should be understood as the "considered reflection and judgment" of "statesmen" about "the national interest and the public welfare." That's the way all the Nixons and Kissingers hope to be treated by historians.

The worst example of the new history Himmelfarb could find was a question on the College Board Advanced Placement examination in American history: "How and why did the lives and status of Northern middle-class women change between 1776 and 1876?" In that type of question, Himmelfarb writes, women are "demeaned" because attention is directed to the "ordinary" aspects of their lives—work, family, social relations. There's a term for her attitude: elitism.

Himmelfarb's *New Republic* article, narrower in scope than the one in *Harper's*, focuses on the links between British Marxist historians and the Communist Party. She reports that the distinguished journal *Past & Present* was founded by members of the Communist Party Historians' Group in 1952 and that Eric Hobsbawm remains a party member. Those facts, she says, are "little known." Actually, Hobsbawm discussed both topics in an essay six years ago, as has *Radical History Review*, in interviews going back to 1976 and in the edited collection *Visions of History*, published in 1984.

Himmelfarb is less interested in Marxist historians' scholarship than in their politics. She repeats the cliché that they are "bound by a predetermined schema that applies to all periods and events." Yet she praises E.P. Thompson for his "eloquent, richly textured" account of working-class development; she credits Hobsbawm for an "impressive personal accomplishment and formidable contribution"; and she compliments Rodney Hilton for revising Marx's interpretation of the feudal peasantry to "make them worthy of sympathy and respect." All these writers, she observes, have abandoned a simple economic determinist version of Marxist theory; all are more interested in culture and politics than in the mode of production. So what happened to the "predetermined schema"?

All the historians in question except Hobsbawm left the Communist Party thirty years ago. They should have left earlier, Himmelfarb says, during "the highly publicized purges and trials of the 1930s." That criticism is especially unfair to Thompson, who was 10 when the purges began, in 1934. Although all of them—Thompson in particular—have rejected what they define as Stalinist history, that's not enough for Himmelfarb, because they remain men of the left. Himmelfarb objects strongly to Thompson's refusal to follow what he calls the "well-worn paths of apostasy," or become a "Public Confessor and Renegade." For Himmelfarb, if you're not her kind of anti-Communist, you're a Stalinist dupe. The greatest failing of the British Marxist historians as historians, she writes, is that they have not undertaken an analysis of Stalinism. Thompson, she suggests, should set aside his biography of William Blake to write about the Soviet "Doctor's Plot" of 1952-53, and Christopher Hill should stop thinking about Milton and get to work on Lysenko. In the end, Himmelfarb is guilty of the crime she charges the radicals with committing: bringing politics into historical scholarship.

The group of conservative historians who publish the journal *Continuity* see their audience as being composed of what editor Paul Gottfried described in 1983 as "non-Establishment i.e. non-leftist historians." The targets of their wrath, however, are not just radicals and Marxists. One article criticized Winston Churchill for arguing in *The Gathering Storm* that Stalin was forced into the Nazi-Soviet pact by the West's actions at Munich; another chastised Arthur Schlesinger Jr. for defending President Truman's "limited responses to Soviet advances in the Balkans and Iran."

The magazine devotes considerable space to defending the Confederacy and lambasting "Northerners, and Southerners who thought like Northerners," who have "invaded the field of southern history." Even the journal's founding

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editor, Aileen Kraditor, was faulted for writing in her recent book *The Radical Persuasion*—an assault on leftist historians—that working conditions in factories in the early twentieth century were "brutal" and "dangerous" and that factory owners had "arbitrary power."

Who reads *Continuity*? Virtually no one. *Ulrich's Guide to Periodicals* reports that the journal has a circulation of 300; *Radical History Review* ten times that. If there is an audience for *Continuity*'s brand of right-wing history, it does not seem to be among academics who read scholarly journals.

The Reagan Administration has its own agenda for the humanities, laid out over the past two years by Secretary of Education William Bennett. At a neoconservative gathering last May he said that the nation's schools have left students "intellectually defenseless" against radical critics. And he called for an "intellectual initiative" that would transmit his kind of American values through an emphasis on the teaching of American history.

That initiative was spelled out in a forty-two page report issued by the National Endowment for the Humanities in November 1984. The nation's colleges and universities, according to the report, should convey "the accumulated wisdom of our civilization." The core readings in American history should be the Declaration of Independence, *The Federalist Papers*, the Constitution, the Lincoln-Douglas debates, the Gettysburg Address—plus, Bennett added, the Bible. As the bicentennial of the Constitution approaches, this political debate is likely to heat up, the left teaching about the Bill of Rights, the right arguing that the Founding Fathers opposed gun control and favored school prayer. The Reagan agenda is objectionable because it would have students study the Declaration instead of the experiences of working people, blacks and women. In any case, it seems unlikely that reading *The Federalist Papers* will garner much enthusiasm among young Reaganites on campus; they prefer *Iacocca*.

The neocons are right about one thing: there's a tremendous gap between the political currents of the Age of Reagan and the intellectual life of the universities. The field of history provides the most contested terrain, and the clearest evidence of the intellectual strength of the left. In the past several years an impressive number of prizes have gone to radical and feminist historians. Leon Litwack won the 1980 Pulitzer Prize for *Been in the Storm So Long*, a study of blacks' experiences of emancipation following the Civil War. Columbia University's Bancroft Prize has been awarded to Mary Ryan for *Cradle of the Middle Class*, a study of how family patterns shaped nineteenth-century American social structure; Suzanne Lebsock for *The Free Women of Petersburg*, a study of status and culture in the antebellum South; and Jacqueline Jones for *Labor of Love, Labor of Sorrow*, a history of black women from slavery to the present. Recent prizes of the American Historical Association and the Organization of American Historians have gone to Nick Salvatore for his biography of Eugene V. Debs; Ira Berlin and associates for *Freedom: A Documentary History of Emancipation 1861–1867*; and Sean Wilentz for *Chants Democratic*, a study of working-class culture and politics in New York City before 1850.

The appeal of left-wing scholarship was evident at last fall's New School symposium, titled Agenda for Radical History and sponsored by the school's Eugene Lang College. Eric Hobsbawm said radical history's "most widely recognized achievement has been to win a place for the history of ordinary people, common men and women." Christopher Hill spoke of the "importance for radical historians of seeing history as a whole" and of creating "a sense of retrospective solidarity with all that's gone before us." Perry Anderson of *New Left Review* argued that the strength of Marxist history lay in its adherence to a theory that addresses the issue of causation; E.P. Thompson declared the radical project was "finding the 'reasons' of social unreason." Joan Wallach Scott of the Princeton Institute for Advanced Study criticized all of them for paying lip service to the history of women. One thousand people attended; it's inconceivable that any panel of conservative historians could attract an audience of even half that size.

The Organization of American Historians has elected several leftists to its presidency in recent years: Eugene D. Genovese in 1978, William Appleman Williams in 1980, Gerda Lerner in 1981 and Leon Litwack this year. The American Historical Association recently elected its first woman president, Natalie Zemon Davis of Princeton, who is also an editorial associate of *Radical History Review*. At the Organization of American Historians' annual meeting in New York City in April, fourteen past and present officers drew up a petition opposing aid to the *contras*. The signers included the current president and two past presidents, Anne Firor Scott and Arthur S. Link. "We deplore President Reagan's distortion of history for political purposes in describing the Nicaraguan contras, whose systematic abuse of human rights has been documented by independent observers, as the 'moral equivalent of the founding fathers,'" they declared, condemning aid to the *contras* as "a continuation of a long history of U.S. intervention in the internal affairs of Central American and Caribbean nations."

Cast against this background, neoconservatives in academia are not only on the defensive; they are steadily losing ground. That helps explain the growing nastiness that marks their writing: Norman Cantor's lame joke that Lawrence Stone and other Princeton historians "want to drive to the barricades in their Ferraris," and the recent remark in *The American Scholar* by British constitutional historian Geoffrey Elton—Himmelfarb's exemplary historian—that the history of women is "written by fanatics" and that the late Joan Kelly, author of the posthumously published *Women, History and Theory*, was "beatified" by women's historians after she died of cancer, "a charismatic disease in such circles." Especially in the crucial field of American history, radical and feminist historians have made their work the center of discussion and debate; their ideas and their agenda for the field can no longer be dismissed or ignored. The recent neoconservative attacks on radical scholarship are evidence not of the weakness of the academic left but of its strength. □

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DEMOCRACY REDUX

Argentina Says, 'Never Again!'

GEOFFREY FOX

"Democracy is in fashion" in Argentina these days, an Argentine intellectual, back after long exile, remarked recently with a mixture of skepticism and pride. President Raúl Alfonsín's democratic government (as it is almost always called to distinguish it from its dictatorial predecessors) can boast significant accomplishments since it took office in December 1983. Most important, the systematic, arbitrary assaults and murders by the armed forces have ended, and a delirious inflation rate, which approached 40 percent per month as recently as last June, has been tamed to a serious but manageable 2 to 4 percent monthly, restoring a minimal predictability to daily life. The first order of business, however, and the focus of public attention for most of last year, was the trial of nine top-ranking military men who served on the first three juntas, which ruled from 1976 to 1982.

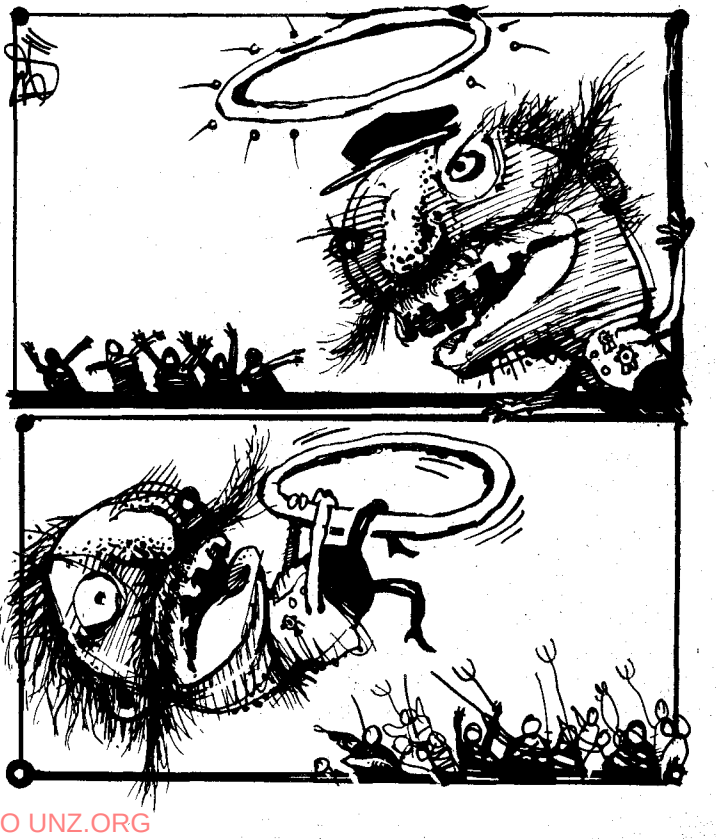
Last December the Federal Chamber of the Capital sentenced Lieut. Gen. Jorge Rafael Videla, President of the first junta and former Supreme Commander of the Army, and Adm. Emilio Eduardo Massera, former Supreme Commander of the Navy, to life imprisonment; three other defendants were given lesser terms and four were acquitted. The prosecution appealed the sentences, widely considered lenient, just before Christmas—the beginning of the summer vacation season in Argentina. A response from the Supreme Court is still awaited. Other trials of military and police officers, including those of former Buenos Aires provincial police chief Ramón J. Camps and of the officers from the junta in power during the Malvinas/Falklands war, are just getting under way. And last month Aflonsín ordered that the 1,700 pending cases be speeded up.

The five former junta members were convicted of multiple counts of homicide, kidnapping, torture, aggravated robbery, falsification of public documents, "reduction to servitude," extortion, and abduction of minors, among other crimes. Under their command, armed gangs had seized and secretly held and tortured scores of thousands of men, women and children, of whom at least 9,000—and perhaps as many as 30,000—were "disappeared." The defendants, represented by teams of prestigious lawyers, have challenged not merely the relevance and credibility of the evidence but the very right of civilian authorities to judge commanders who, they claim, were engaged in a "just war" against subversion.

That rationale for dictatorship seems to have lost its force (if it ever had any) among a majority of Argentines, judging by the scant popular enthusiasm for proposals for a *punto final*, or full stop, to terminate further prosecutions of officers charged with such abuses. A government-commissioned poll last December found that 42 percent of those surveyed opposed an amnesty for military men accused of crimes, and 27 percent considered the sentences of the junta members, including the two life imprisonments, to be "benevolent."

Nevertheless, an array of conservative forces, which are not allied in any conscious, conspiratorial sense but which fear the army less than they fear democracy, would welcome a *punto final*. Those include Buenos Aires's Juan Carlos Cardinal Aramburu and other leaders of the Catholic Church, who fear what the Cardinal calls "unrestricted permissiveness." (Two moral threats that exercised the Cardinal recently were a movement to legalize divorce and talk of showing Jean-Luc Godard's movie *Hail Mary*.) They also include members of the big-business elite, union bosses who are afraid of losing their grip on their organizations and former death-squad thugs who like to be photographed in Nazi regalia, such as the notorious Raúl Guglielminetti, who mysteriously slipped through police fingers earlier this year after being extradited from Spain on a murder charge. Most disturbing to many Argentines are the potentially dangerous antidemocrats in the officer corps who are still on active duty, along with the lawyers and businessmen whose careers are intertwined with theirs.

The trial of the nine junta members became a mass education in civics, somewhat like the Watergate hearings in this country. People not only learned the extent of the abuses of power; they also heard over and over again the arguments for legal restraints and for punishing the wrongdoers. The trial has had "a fundamental importance because it has



Geoffrey Fox just completed a novel, The Liberators, *set in Venezuela.*

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been clarifying," said the prosecutor, Julio César Strassera. "What it means is the restoration of the legal order."

That is true even though the conservative press downplayed the trial and Army Intelligence operatives in the courtroom hinted darkly of retaliation against unfriendly reporters, according to Alfredo Torre, a journalism professor at La Plata University who monitored press coverage. However, there were reporters who refused to be intimidated, and, supplementing coverage in the established dailies, the tabloid *El Diario del Juicio* ("Trial Journal") published verbatim testimony, photographs and background articles and became a best-seller on the newsstands. A flood of books and articles were published in response to the insatiable demand for information.

There was much to report. Strassera called nearly 800 witnesses to testify during the seventeen-week proceedings, more than 700 of whom were victims of atrocities by military personnel. They described their abductions—typically by squads of heavily armed men who burst into homes while families were in bed—and the torments they saw or, since most were hooded or blindfolded during captivity, heard and felt.

The trial was unprecedented, in Argentina or anywhere else. As Strassera points out, the Nuremberg trials of defeated Nazis were imposed by the victors and "applied a code that had not been in force" at the time the crimes were committed. The trials of the Greek colonels after their fall from power in 1974 were likewise based on a newly passed, retroactive constitutional provision. "Here we were dealing with common crimes, provided for in the penal code since 1922," Strassera said. That legal strategy was a deliberate move to deny the military hierarchy's claim that it was above the law.

When Strassera cried out in his closing argument, "Nunca más!"—"Never again!"—the spectators in the crowded courtroom burst into applause. After hearing his sentence, the unreconstructed Videla commended them all "to the great whore that whelped you," and the crowd answered with shouts of "Murderer!"

Nunca más is also the hopeful, anguished title of the report of the National Commission on the Disappearance of Persons, or Conadep. "During nine months we made a descent into hell," recalled the 74-year-old novelist Ernesto Sabato, who chaired the commission.

"What I can tell you," Sabato said in an interview at his home in Santos Lugares, on the outskirts of Buenos Aires, "is that in Argentina something has been done that is unique. We have lots of calamities in Argentina, so at least let's recognize something that hasn't been done anywhere else in the world."

Sabato said that what is needed to stabilize democracy is a kind of cultural reconstruction, not only to inculcate the values of democracy but "to re-educate Argentina away from the notion that it is this size"—he modeled a tiny country with his hands—and "to create a country of dignity."

"Here we have an economic catastrophe. The military dictatorship left a destroyed country, and certainly it is a priority to lift up the country economically." But to do that, he insisted, will require more than "so-called economic science"; it will require "faith."

The economic shambles left by a regime that deliberately dismantled industry, borrowed massively and wastefully, and finally waged the disastrous and costly Malvinas/Falklands war would tempt many nations to seek quick and drastic solutions. So it is remarkable that most Argentines seem to believe that slow progress within the democratic process is their best hope. Revulsion at the crimes of the dictatorship is one reason for their belief, and Alfonsín's skill in projecting a particularly Argentine vision is another. In a televised speech last February 7 the Argentine President defined "democratization" as "an attitude of cooperation, which always opposes aggressive and offensive behavior and selfish individualism." Thus Alfonsín is appealing to the impulses for unity and mass participation that made Peronism so formidable, while at the same time affirming the right of dissent and the rule of law. Given Argentina's recent history, legitimation of such principles is a momentous accomplishment and a necessary, if not sufficient, condition for rebuilding a shattered society.

"We Argentines are pessimists," says a character in Sabato's famous novel *On Heroes and Tombs*, "because we have great reserves of hopes and of illusions, since to be a pessimist one must previously have hoped for something." There is certainly reason for pessimism today, but the strength of popular desire for a lawful, democratic society also taps those great reserves of hope. □

Can Duarte

(*Continued From Front Cover*)

staff member of the House Foreign Affairs Committee. "But that will be only a deficit-related fact of life. It has absolutely nothing to do with political objections." Segundo Mercado-Lorenz, who works on the El Salvador project of the Washington-based Coalition for a New Foreign and Military Policy, concurred: "The most we are hoping for in our work against Salvadoran aid is to put Congress in a holding pattern."

Despite Duarte's prolonged honeymoon with Washington, El Salvador rather than Nicaragua continues to be the flash point in Central America. Including this year's allocations, the Reagan Administration's aid to the *contras*—about $250 million since 1981—equals only 11 percent of the $2.3 billion the United States has invested in El Salvador since 1979. Critics of aid to the *contras* warn that it will mean the deployment of U.S. advisers. But fifty-five such advisers have, in effect, been managing the Salvadoran military command for the past four years, according to an official count, and dozens more by unofficial estimates. Eyebrows were raised in March when U.S. choppers were used to ferry Honduran troops to the Nicaraguan border, but for at least two years American-piloted OV-1s and C-130s have been flying reconnaissance and intelligence mis-

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sions for the Salvadoran government forces. And in the stark terms of human suffering, the Salvadoran conflict has taken nearly ten times the number of lives as the *contra* war in Nicaragua.

Just when Congressional complacency on El Salvador is most pervasive, Duarte faces the toughest challenge of his presidency. A deteriorating economic situation, sharply escalating labor militancy and the resurgence of political opposition in the cities, as well as a vicious, seemingly endless war, make him a poor risk.

In an interview last fall, Juan María Méndez, a labor lawyer and a Duarte supporter, summed up the President's record:

> Duarte has not fulfilled his promises. Agrarian reform is dead. He has done almost nothing on human rights. His position on Contadora is the same as Reagan's. The peace dialogue is dead. He is risking loss of support from the church, from the undecided sectors and from the moderate unions. He is giving the game away to the left.

His words were prophetic. Since our conversation, Duarte's isolation has become obvious to all but his financial backers in Washington.

By forging an alliance with the leaders of the armed forces, Duarte showed he is seeking a strictly military solution to the Salvadoran conflict. Instead of criticizing the privileged oligarchy, against which he spoke out two decades ago, he has accommodated himself to the counter-insurgency strategy so dear to the White House. He has become complicit with, and a prisoner of, the Salvadoran high command.

Duarte's emphasis on military measures and his neglect of reforms, coupled with the guerrillas' highly effective sabotage campaign, have intensified El Salvador's economic crisis. In January, Duarte imposed what even his advisers admitted was a severe "I.M.F.-type" austerity program, provoking a tidal wave of protests. The traditionally centrist pro-Duarte sector of the labor movement, the Popular Democratic Union (U.P.D.), which became estranged from the President last year, has obtained a divorce. In February the most influential components of the U.P.D. joined with the leftist teachers' and public administration unions to form a solid antigovernment front, the National Unity of Salvadoran Workers (UNTS). The group's founding, on February 8, was the prelude to a fast-evolving series of public demonstrations that have shaken the regime to its foundations.

§ On February 21, UNTS defied the six-year state of siege, which Duarte decreed when he sat as titular head of the military-civilian junta, and organized the largest protest rally seen in the capital since 1980. Nearly 50,000 Salvadoran workers took to the streets chanting, "No to the Austerity Packet! No to War! Yes to Dialogue!"

§ On March 25, the streets of San Salvador were filled with 25,000 anti-Duarte protesters marking the sixth anniversary of the murder of Catholic Archbishop Oscar Arnulfo Romero. The demonstrators demanded that Duarte make good his promise to prosecute the prelate's assassins. Choruses of the leftist slogan "The people united will never be defeated!" punctuated that event.

§ On the weekend of April 3, UNTS sponsored a historic public forum on the economic crisis and the prospects for peace. The bitterly anticommunist Salvadoran Small Business Federation (Fenapes) and other conservative groups sent delegations. The 600 delegates endorsed a call for a rollback of the austerity program and for a national referendum on a negotiated settlement with the guerrillas.

§ Thousands of public works employees throughout the country went on a series of strikes during the third week of April, culminating in a four-hour general strike, the first complete work stoppage in six years. An estimated 350,000 workers observed the half-day protest by laying down their tools.

§ On May Day, 25,000 workers marched through San Salvador against government economic and military policies.

The official inflation rate is set at 30 percent a year, and unemployment is running between 35 and 50 percent. With unionists claiming that the cost of living has increased by 150 percent in the past four years, and with Duarte determined to place the cost of the war on the backs of the poor and of the fragile middle class, which originally supported him, labor unrest and militancy can only intensify. Nearly one hundred work stoppages or strikes occurred in El Salvador in 1984, compared with only four in 1982. In Duarte's second year there were 150.

Duarte's base of support in the Catholic hierarchy has also shrunk. Archbishop Arturo Rivera y Damas, who was enthusiastic in his approval of Duarte two years ago, is now distancing himself from the President. In his nationally broadcast Sunday homilies the prelate has denounced the military's massive bomb and sweep campaigns in rural areas. And on March 4, when Duarte announced he would reopen peace talks with the guerrillas only if Nicaraguan President Daniel Ortega Saavedra parleyed with the *contras*, Rivera y Damas exposed Duarte's offer for the sham that it was. The church-sponsored Legal Aid Office also remains the loudest voice decrying the human rights situation, about which a recent Americas Watch report said, "At no time has it been possible for us to assert that there has been a general improvement."

Duarte's government has not prosecuted a single army officer for any of the 60,000 murders and 5,000 disappearances that have occurred since 1980. At the beginning of his administration Duarte named a special committee to investigate the death-squad killings, but the committee seems to have stopped meeting. The only officers arrested this year were charged with leading a kidnapping ring that specialized in snatching oligarchs and wealthy businessmen, for whom they could collect a high ransom. On May 7, Duarte ordered the release of one of the officers, saying there was insufficient evidence.

Militarily, there are no clear-cut signs that Duarte has turned the corner in the war against the guerrillas of the Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front. "The war has moved into a different rhythm," said a well-placed Salvadoran political scientist. "There is no winner or loser. No

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sign of a knockout or a T.K.O. Maybe the last round can be given to the government on points. But this remains an open-ended slug fest." A report by the staff of the research and documentation center of El Salvador's Central American University describes the military situation as a "dynamic equilibrium," in which "each side seems capable of responding to the other's improvements."

The government forces have vastly enhanced their air capability as a result of Congressional largesse: more than sixty-five Huey helicopter gunships, seven Hughes 500 Wasp armed helicopters, eleven Cessna 0-2 attack planes, nine A-37 Dragonfly bombers and seven AC-47 air attack platforms (not to mention seven Fouga Magister jet planes and six Ourogan bombers bought from France). "Congress now says each new plane to El Salvador has to be individually approved, but that's a laugh," said one Democratic aide. "The Salvadoran Air Force doesn't need any more planes or choppers."

The beefed-up air force has bombed and strafed civilian populations in areas believed to be F.M.L.N. strongholds. The brutality of the army's January/February attack on the Guazapa volcano—a maneuver ominously named after the Central Intelligence Agency's Operation Phoenix in the Vietnam War—brought worldwide condemnation. The Salvadoran military's latest strategy is to "dry up" peasant support for the insurgents by first bombing the civilian areas and then "rescuing" the victims from guerrilla control by ferrying them out, interrogating them for a day or two and then dumping them in a refugee center.

The guerrillas' civilian support has unquestionably been diminished by the government's aerial superiority, but a new insurgent strategy of "prolonged attrition" is taking its toll on the U.S.-trained army. Government casualties are running high. The F.M.L.N. claims to have killed or wounded 6,500 soldiers last year. And even if, as claimed, the government has begun to penetrate rebel-held areas once thought inviolable, the guerrillas are carrying out ambushes, skirmishes and sabotage in once-peaceful provinces. At last count, there was guerrilla activity in all of the country's fourteen departments. In addition, the guerrillas' military-political coalition, once rent with serious divisions—especially at the time of last June's killing of four U.S. marines at a San Salvador cafe—has in the past months moved toward a stronger, unified command structure. Far from winding down, El Salvador's war seems, in the words of Archbishop Rivera y Damas, "apocalyptic and interminable."

What are Duarte's prospects? Since his political resurrection in 1979 he has consistently served as the prime figure in securing U.S. support for the Salvadoran regime. As long as the United States considers it advantageous to keep that regime in place with substantial infusions of aid—and there is no sign of that situation changing—Duarte's position is guaranteed. He remains the only available human face. There should be no doubt, however, that Duarte's policies are subject to the veto of the military establishment. The kidnapping and subsequent release of Duarte's daughter Inés by guerrillas last fall gave some insight into the President's relationship with the armed forces. Each of his moves designed to win his daughter's release depended on the approval of a military committee.

The U.S. and Salvadoran governments' pursuit of a military solution to the war makes impossible any reconciliation with the guerrillas and destroys the chances for negotiations, which could lead to a more democratic society. It also further drains a bankrupt economy. The resulting austerity measures fuel urban unrest and reinforce the militant labor and student movements ideologically aligned with the insurgents. Duarte's vanishing social base reduces any potential bargaining power he has with his generals, making him an ever more pliant instrument of the military. And yet the military gets no closer to victory. As the labor movement burgeons, the armed forces and therefore the government of El Salvador may soon find themselves squeezed between two converging and hostile fronts: guerrillas in the countryside and protesters in the cities. Duarte, in the meantime, has left himself no room to maneuver. He careens along on his present course, while his financiers in Congress, blind to the collision that awaits him, keep pumping in the fuel. □

Qaddafi's Medal

(*Continued From Page 717*)

ington State University, but the flamboyant Williams was the best-known and most outspoken member of the delegation and may well have projected himself as its spokesman.

Williams also told me that he had given Qaddafi a brass medallion, roughly two and a half inches in diameter, bearing a likeness of King. It was one of 20,000 such medallions he had purchased for 30 cents each for use in a fund-raising drive of his Metropolitan Atlanta branch of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference. Williams said that before presenting Qaddafi with the token, he had given one to a Libyan bellhop, a driver and a student.

Williams blamed the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith for circulating misinformation about the medallion, but the real culprit was the Libyan press agency, which embellished the event for propaganda purposes. Perhaps to ingratiate himself with the Libyans, who financed the trip, Williams refrained from correcting the media accounts.

It is tempting to conclude that the resurrection of the myth of the King medal seven years later was part of a right-wing attempt to discredit black civil rights leaders. What is more likely is that its inclusion in the Quinn-Landess book was the result of careless scholarship, and it was passed on by *Commentary* without being checked. Maybe the backdrop of U.S.-Libyan tensions made its exhumation particularly believable to some conservatives.

Whenever I hear about the so-called King decoration, I take out the 30-cent brass medallion Hosea Williams presented to me at our Atlanta meeting three years ago. It's the one thing Colonel Qaddafi and I have in common.

ROBERT G. WEISBORD

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BOOKS & THE ARTS.

Stalking the Criminal Chromosome

STEVEN ROSE

CRIME AND HUMAN NATURE. *By James Q. Wilson and Richard J. Herrnstein. Simon & Schuster. 639 pp. $22.95.*

As Stephen Jay Gould has pointed out, the idea that biology is destiny has an extraordinary capacity to mutate and reassert itself, no matter how often scientists declare it extinct. In the nineteenth century, a low forehead was believed to indicate criminal tendencies. In the 1920s, intelligence tests were used to support immigration restrictions on non-Europeans coming to the United States. In the late 1960s and early 1970s, Arthur Jensen used the I.Q. test to advance a racist theory of intelligence, while Lionel Tiger and Robin Fox argued that men are constitutionally aggressive and women subservient and docile. Each of these theories has been shown to have no basis in scientific fact. But their species is resilient. A few months ago, James Q. Wilson and Richard J. Herrnstein published a book, Crime and Human Nature, *whose thesis is that criminal behavior stems largely from genetic factors.*

So far, the controversy promised by the book's early reviews has failed to materialize. The following essay is an effort, once again, to put out the fire of biological determinism, which in Reagan's America has found particularly dry wood to burn. —*The Editors*

Crime figures went up again last year in Britain. The number of recorded rapes rose by more than 20 percent; that of sexually abused children, by more than 90 percent. The prisons were fuller than at any time in history and there were more police, with higher pay, than ever before. There was also widespread inner-city violence, in the course of which at least four people died: two Asian shopkeepers trapped in their burning store, a news photographer hit by a stone and a policeman who was stabbed. The police themselves shot and paralyzed a black woman whose son was suspected of a firearms offense; broke into the apartment of another black family so violently that a woman there collapsed and died of a heart attack; truncheoned to death a black Hell's Angel; and shot a white 5-year-old while searching his home for his father.

According to Margaret Thatcher and her Cabinet, this increase in crime is not connected to record unemployment, poverty, homelessness or the institutional and individual racism of a decaying and deindustrializing society. Instead, it has everything to do with the decline in family authority, the rise in moral permissiveness and the presence of a disaffected black minority which is "swamping" the law-abiding indigenous population. In Thatcher's Britain, as in Reagan's America, accounting for the social crisis by blaming the victim is again the order of the day.

All political orders engender their apologists, whether priests or professors, who offer intellectual, religious, philosophical or scientific justification for the ruling values. The strength of such legitimations is that they are perceived as independent of the social and political climate in which they are produced. But they can be better understood as reflections of it.

How else to explain the extraordinary enthusiasm in the last decade for biologically determinist accounts of why we do what we do? Alleged human universals, from aggression and racism to capitalism and patriarchy, as well as differences in intelligence, aptitude or susceptibility to mental disorder, have all been "scientifically" identified as the products of innate human biology. Such "scientific" theories have been seized upon, in the United States and Britain, by New Right and neoconservative philosophers and movements. It was only a matter of time before the determinist tide would reach the origins of criminality, and we would be told once more that criminals are born, not made—that a propensity to violent robbery, along with a propensity to poverty, runs in the genes.

Biological criminology has a difficult history to live down. Cesare Lombroso's theories about criminal head shapes, advanced at the end of the nineteenth century, have long been laughed out of court. So too have William Sheldon's claims, in the 1940s, that criminals are likely to have a particularly muscular build. While the current of biological determinism and eugenic thought has never entirely dried up, it was largely discounted in more liberal times. But it is marvelous what the prestige of two Harvard professorships on the dust jacket of a book can do. The cover of *Crime and Human Nature* proudly identifies its authors as Henry Lee Shattuck Professor of Government and Edgar Pierce Professor of Psychology at Harvard University. And the reception, at least by the popular press, of this 639-page, somewhat laborious and by no means elegantly written survey of criminological literature, has been little short of adulatory.

Only the book's ideological resonance with the spirit of the times can explain this response. A casual reader, working his or her way through chapters on crime in relation to "constitution" (read, mainly, genetics), gender, age, intelligence, family, school, community, mass media, drugs and (at the end) race will find an account of the research literature from Lombroso to the present day hedged around with uncertainty. A mathematical appendix on behavioral reinforcement theory and fifty-three pages of bibliography add little force to the argument. Given the book's scholarly pretensions, the reader is likely to be somewhat surprised when the authors finally recommend, as a way of diminishing crime, a return to what my country's Prime Minister calls "Victorian values": more family responsibility, less permissiveness, more policing and a greater emphasis on punishment.

Readers are likely to be even more puzzled when they try to relate the substance of the book to the grandiose claims set out at the beginning of the first chapter: "This book is an effort to set forth an understanding of human nature by examining one common, if regrettable, manifestation of that nature, criminality." Indeed the authors go on, as if in a mere casual aside, to assert that they could equally well have studied

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human nature by way of sexuality, work or political activity. Apparently the merest scholarly whim led them to focus instead on criminality.

Human nature is a difficult and slippery concept which has vexed philosophers and theologians throughout recorded history. But for Wilson and Herrnstein, it can apparently be explained by a mélange of incompletely grasped genetic theory and the sort of naïve behaviorism that serious researchers discarded twenty years ago. They dress their thin scholarship in impressive-sounding generalizations such as: "The central argument of this book is that behavior, including criminal behavior, is controlled by its consequences." Translated, this piece of portentous vacuity means that people have foresight and tend to think before they act. It is matched by the opening sentence of the final chapter: "The argument of this book is that there *is* a human nature that develops in intimate settings out of a complex interaction of constitutional and social factors." Yes, indeed, we are products of our biology, our personal life history and the social order. If that's worth 639 pages (not forgetting the mathematical appendix) then philosophers can rest easy.

In fact, the references to human nature turn out to be little more than a come-on. The authors' aims in the body of the text appear more modest, though by no means unimportant: to contest the view that criminal activities arise in the context of an inegalitarian society wracked by poverty, unemployment and racism, which places a high premium on material success and offers ready access to the means of violence. Instead, they locate the causes of criminality in innate biology and early childhood experience.

Investigating the causes of any human activity is an extraordinarily complex task. Part of the problem is one of definition: even within modern Western culture acts that are criminal in one context (like killing or appropriating property against the will of the owner) are not in another (as when carried out in war or by a foreclosing bank). Other times, other cultures, have different definitions. Wilson and Herrnstein endeavor to confine themselves to acts which they claim are regarded as criminal in virtually all cultures, like murder, robbery, rape and incest (though they leave wholly undiscussed the evidence provided by recent feminist scholarship that while the latter two are generally

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condemned in theory, they are widely condoned in practice).

This last omission highlights another major problem which any discussion of criminality must take into account. Even if we can define crimes, how do we know they have occurred? Do police records suffice, or do they merely reflect changes in policing practice or public awareness? And in exploring crimes as reflections of some aspect of human nature, do we take an individual's circumstances and motives into account or do we judge only the actions?

Although they declare some concern for these methodological problems, Wilson and Herrnstein often lump together very different acts in their search for common causes. Yet if there are indeed biological causes for murder and robbery, are there any reasons to assume that they are similar, or that they apply to rape and incest as well? The trick of arbitrarily lumping together very different social phenomena as if they were all manifestations of some unitary process is the first fallacy of social theorizing. The first fallacy of biological determinism is then to assume that a single biological cause must underlie these social phenomena. In fact, the authors are inconsistent, as they are throughout the book, using their data in whatever manner best suits their thesis. When the statistics can't be made to fit a unified theory of crime, they take a different tack. For example, in their effort to show a relationship between "intelligence," as measured by I.Q. tests, and criminal behavior, they split crimes between "high intelligence" ones like forgery and embezzlement and "low I.Q." ones like homicide and rape.

As Wilson and Herrnstein themselves say, their book is not based on original research but is a work of "synthesis." But despite their assiduity in collecting published data, they ignore the first rule of such synthesis: a critical approach toward the primary sources. Data recorded for many purposes, over many years, is agglomerated and cited in support of their overall contentions. One of the striking features of this accumulation, despite Edward Banfield's claim on the jacket that the book "could not have been written fifteen or even ten years ago," is how old many of the sources are. Great emphasis is placed on research findings of the 1940s and 1950s, although later researchers have expressed grave doubts about the methodology of the period.

Going back to the primary data often reveals how flimsy is the evidence on which the authors' sweeping assertions are based. Leon J. Kamin's review of *Crime and Human Nature* in the February *Scientific American* gives some examples. Here are some more, drawn from Wilson and Herrnstein's treatment of genetic factors.

One way of hunting for genetic factors in human behavior is to study identical twins, who share the same genes. If such twins behave in a similar way more frequently than do nonidentical twins, who share their environment but not their genes, then, it is argued, the increased similarity must have a genetic basis. In fact, this simple assumption is flawed for a number of reasons, including the obvious one: parents tend to treat identical twins more similarly than they do nonidentical twins. Most twin studies have serious methodological problems and, in general, the earlier studies were more flawed than the more recent ones. Wilson and Herrnstein list a series of studies beginning in Germany in 1929 and ending in Norway in 1976. The earliest two studies found that 77 percent and 100 percent, respectively, of identical twins were concordant—that is, if one was criminal, the other was—as opposed to only 12 percent and 0 percent of nonidentical twins. (The second study was based on only four pairs of twins!) The most recent study, based on 31 sets of twins, finds a concordance rate of 26 percent for identical and 15 percent for nonidentical twins. That is, even setting aside the various factors that can bias twin studies, the "residual" genetic contribution to the similarity in criminal behavior between the twins has dramatically decreased from 65 percent or even 100 percent to a mere 11 percent.

How do Wilson and Herrnstein handle this anomaly? Not by looking critically at their sources and trying to explain these extraordinary discrepancies. Instead, they "have pooled all the data . . . to give a single overall comparison of the [identical-nonidentical] differences in concordance." Not surprisingly, the seven pre-1940s, mainly German studies (remember what was going on in Germany in the 1930s?) outweigh the later ones, and the authors are left with this gratifying conclusion: "Pooled concordance for [identical] twins was .69 [or 69 percent]; for same-sex [nonidentical] twins it was .33 [or 33 percent], strongly indicative, within the limitations of the data and the twin method, of a substantial genetic component in criminal behavior." Wilson and Herrnstein would have done well to apply the computer hacker's adage to their statistical method: garbage in, garbage out. True to form, when they turn to race and refer to a study which found no relationship between heredity and personality, this time among black twins, they conclude that "perhaps because of defects in the tests, perhaps for other reasons, the authors were unable to isolate a significant genetic component." Heads we win; tails you lose.

A further example illustrates another way to make statistics tell the story you want to hear. It deals with the case of the so-called "criminal chromosome." The term derives from the observation that some men have a congenital disorder in which they carry a double dose of the "male" Y chromosome. Whereas females have two X chromosomes and normal males one X and one Y, these men have one X and two Y chromosomes. In 1965 a report from Scotland suggested that there was an abnormally high proportion of XYY men in maximum security state hospitals. The claim was that such men (as well as being abnormally tall) are inclined to violence and hence to criminal acts. Subsequent studies, as Wilson and Herrnstein properly report, cast doubt on these first claims, and the idea of a criminal chromosome dropped into disrepute. But now Wilson and Herrnstein resurrect it, strengthened, it would appear, by a study conducted in Denmark in the mid-1970s. Here is how they cite this study, which used comprehensive Danish records to study the total male population born between 1944 and 1947: "Cytogenetic techniques turned up twelve XYY men among [the tallest 15 percent of the population], of whom five had a criminal record of one or more offenses, a prevalence rate of over 40 percent. Among XY men, the prevalence rate was only 9.3 percent, which is significantly lower." Among XY men of poor school performance, the expected crime rate would be 17.2 percent (that is, say, two out of twelve). On the basis of these three extra men in a group of twelve, Wilson and Herrnstein conclude:

> In summary, this careful Danish study tells us that XYY men are at risk for crime partly because they suffer from depressed intelligence and performance in school and partly because of other, as yet unidentified, effects of the extra

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chromosome. *Generalizing the result, the study implies that the genetic ingredient in criminal behavior is partly, but not entirely, accounted for by intellectual and educational variables.* [Emphasis added.]

Many more such examples can be drawn from the book in those areas where I am relatively familiar with the primary literature and research methodology. Not surprisingly, therefore, I am wary of the authors' interpretations in other areas, where they rely more heavily on the social, psychological or sociological literature. Throughout, their method demands that they cite evidence or interpret data so as to relate criminality (their term) to some aspect of an individual's personal characteristics—physique, performance on an I.Q. test, personality as measured on standard rating scales, and so forth. If relationships do not appear to exist, the data is dismissed or partitioned until they do appear. Having found a correlation between a "biological" measurement and criminality, the authors then assert the primacy of the biological. Despite their own clearly stated recognition that correlation does not imply casuality, they repeatedly suggest that the arrow of causation runs from genes to "constitution" to crime.

While such an emphasis on biological determinants in the shaping of human nature is perhaps to be expected from a psychologist like Herrnstein, who comes from a particular behaviorist tradition, it is more surprising that a professor of government should constantly endeavor to reduce the scope of his discipline from the social to the individual—until we remember that this strategy is in keeping with right-wing methodological individualism from Friedrich von Hayek to Milton Friedman. We might still, however, expect a little more sophistication about political theory and process. Do Wilson and Herrnstein really believe, as they suggest, that a Marxist theory of criminality would argue that crime is unconnected to values or attitudes but entirely and directly caused by economic wants? Can they really dismiss the issue of race with the conclusion that "if black rage at accumulated injustice is the cause of black crime, then it is difficult to imagine any solution short of a long and painful reconstruction of deeply held human beliefs," as if such a solution were neither conceivable nor desirable, and as if the issue were one of beliefs alone rather than inequalities in wealth, status and power?

It is a perfectly proper goal of science to integrate biological and social factors in our understanding of the human condition. All human phenomena are both biological and social. Definitions of black and white in human skin color are both genetic and cultural; definitions of men and women are simultaneously about differences in chromosomes and hormones and about the patriarchal social order. To say that men commit more crimes than women, or blacks than whites, is indeed a statement about biology, including genetics, and about society. But it is not the reductionist, causal, biologically determinist statement that Wilson and Herrnstein wish it to be.

Still less is it the explanation of "criminality" which their book claims to provide. Their biological and psychological explanations of why the violent crime rate in the United States is higher than in Japan or Europe carry no more conviction than would political barroom gossip unencumbered by scholarly apparatus. And they cannot begin to answer the question that the opening paragraph of this review raised: Why has the recorded crime rate gone up so dramatically in Britain over the last five years? No shift in gene frequency or al-

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teration in child-rearing practices during the 1960s could account for such large percentage changes. As Wilson and Herrnstein rightly say, the causes of crime are overdetermined. For explanations of these dramatic increases, we had best look at the way the ris in crime has accompanied equally dra matic shifts in economic and socia conditions. About this, biology an psychology have little of relevanc to say. □

And Not So Gladly Teach

HERBERT KOHL

OUR LAST TERM: A Teacher's Diary. *By Lucille G. Natkins. University Press of America. 237 pp. $9.25.*

TALES OUT OF SCHOOL. *By Patrick Welsh. Elisabeth Sifton Books/Viking. 219 pp. $15.95.*

For the past two weeks I have been conducting a university extension class titled Teaching Under Pressure. The members of the class teach in public, private and parochial elementary and secondary schools. What they have in common is a feeling that they are workers under pressure and that the conditions of their work are out of their control. They feel themselves unable to engage in the craft, art and profession of teaching and unable to propose solutions for themselves or their schools. They have become unaccustomed to making educational decisions and feel they are the victims of decisions made from "the outside"—by school administrators, university experts, business people, journalists, the government and everyone else who doesn't teach but has opinions about what schools should be. The two books under review here are concrete examples of the phenomenology of powerlessness that sadly characterizes the lives of teachers these days.

Life Among the Aliens might have been a better title for Lucille G. Natkins's ook *Our Last Term: A Teacher's Diary*. It is without exception the most bitter and racist book on education I have read in years. Natkins taught somewhere, as the Black Muslims put it, in the wilderness of North America—more specifically, in a high school in New York City. She did not like her students; she dreams of the good old days when students were more like her and when the school was run by Mr. Adam, the principal, who proudl announced the two reasons for his suc cess: "One, I'm a bastard . . . and sec ondly, . . . I notice every minor deta and I do something about it."

Mr. Adam's attention to detail an his insistence on order and discipline ar contrasted with the inefficiency of th wimpy humanists and unqualified m norities who, according to Natkins took over the school when Adam re tired. These people are loose, easil manipulated, incompetent and occa sionally corrupt. Nevertheless, as th book goes on it reveals a little secret even Mr. Adam couldn't control th C.E.H. kids. C.E.H. stands for Chi dren with Emotional Handicaps. Wha that phrase usually describes are blac and Hispanic students who are not ur derstood by their teachers and who hav tried to overcome poverty by using th traditional street strategies described i Michael Gold's *Jews Without Money* Here is Natkins's description of th onslaught of C.E.H. kids in her hig school:

> There were daily stories about fights, vandalism, classrooms broken into and lessons disrupted. A CEH kid attempted suicide by throwing herself out of a closed window. In the parking lot four CEH kids were handcuffed and taken away in police cars. . . . There'd been close to a dozen arrests the past month, my chairperson said the next morning. Most were CEH kids.

But it was not only the C.E.H. kids, i was the rest of "them." "They" didn' hand in homework or, when they did, th quality of the work was far inferior t that produced by the "good" middle class kids who attended the schoo before it fell on bad times.

The whole of *Our Last Term* is a lit any of student failure and teacher re sentment. Over lunch the teachers re flect on the correctness of Jensen an Shockley's theory of the genetic inferi ority of blacks and lament the radica chic of the Kennedys, who are somehov to blame for the failure of this hig

Herbert Kohl, a teacher and writer, is the author, most recently, of Growing Minds *(Harper & Row).*

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chool. Attempted suicide, teen-age pregıancy, fractured families, poverty, he inability to read, drug use—these ad conditions of young life are treated lerisively by the demoralized staff, who ılame them and much else on the kids ır their parents. Where is the compasion for these young people, who are tryng to survive against heavy odds in the ungle of New York City?

I see no way that the teachers Natins describes can learn to respect their tudents or improve the school. If this ccount is even close to accurate, the est way to deal with that school is to lose it down and start all over.

Patrick Welsh, author of *Tales Out f School*, is clearly a different kind f teacher. He still loves teaching and as a much easier time of it at his in-egrated Alexandria, Virginia, high chool, which he calls T.C. Williams. In act, as I was reading Welsh I wondered ow Lucille Natkins would feel about eaching if she were in his place, because eing in the right place with the right stuents is the central concern of both of ıese books. One of the authors worked ı a school that was not at all right for er, and the other is almost too comortable. Here is Patrick Welsh's short ıtroduction of himself:

> What the kids get out of the experience . . . (of learning in my classroom) . . . is no mystery. It's the strongly positive sense of owning one's own education, of learning through doing, of discovery for it's own sake and of sharing with others the pride of hard work.

T.C. Williams High School is a segreated integrated high school. It has ademic and vocational tracks, and a parate "career wing" for the vocaonal students, who are classified as not eing "college material." Welsh writes:

> A casual visitor to our school might easily conclude that we are practicing racial segregation. He'd see mostly whites in the physics lab and mostly blacks in the Career Wing . . . Of the 89 students who took my advanced placement English course for college credit in 1983-84, only seven were black and five of them tried to drop out—this in a school in which black and white enrollments are almost equal.

Welsh loves his advanced English asses. Without them he might not reain at T.C. Williams. He has what Natins lacked—students who come from ackgrounds similar to his, who want to learn from him and who make his work fun. He tolerates the lower track classes and tries his damnedest to teach them well, but he admits he is not effective in doing so.

One of the strengths of Welsh's book is the openness with which he discusses such sensitive issues as the low achievement of most poor blacks in his high school and the use of a tracking system, which he supports. He also reveals that the actual placement of students in bottom-rung classes is neither a simple matter nor an objective one. In Alexandria there is a pre-high-school program for the protection of middle-class children. Its goal is to insure that these youngsters do not find themselves in the vocational track. The Alexandria School Board has a Gifted and Talented Advisory Committee "consisting of middle-class parents who, according to school officials, try to squeeze everything they can out of the system for their own children." "It's no secret that [the] school counseling departments . . . group children by their socioeconomic background as well as by academic ability." Such, then, is the price of desegregation.

Welsh's description of his school is vivid and well crafted, but his analysis of what is wrong at T.C. Williams is shallow and he has no solutions for the learning problems at the school. At one point he suggests that some of the poor black students be sent to camps modeled on the Job Corps. At another he states, "Most of them had trouble understanding irony or satire, and couldn't read between the lines to recognize motives and feelings implied by dialogue." "They" also couldn't read books such as *The Catcher in the Rye*, *Native Son* and *Huckleberry Finn*. Welsh seems utterly unaware of the richly ironic and satiric language of many of his low-track students, nor is he sensitive to the fact that a poor black teen-ager might find Holden Caulfield foolish, Bigger Thomas admirable as well as terrifying and Huck Finn racist.

Welsh talks about what he calls the "anti-achievement ethic" of poor black students and never connects that assesment with the kinds of success open to poor blacks, the racial attitudes of whites in Alexandria or the incompetency and unwillingness of the school's staff to teach basic reading skills. And yet he admits that "None of the voc ed faculty has any special experience in dealing with . . . serious learning defi-

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ciencies" and reveals that "during my two decades of teaching I've grown cynical about the chances of 'improving' the poorest teachers."

Welsh also informs us that although segregation was declared unconstitutional in 1954, it wasn't until 1977 that Alexandria was desegregated. What does he think the black community was undergoing during those twenty-three years? And what does he make of the anger of the black staff today? He reports that "Many feel badly treated by a school system that is still controlled by whites, and they feel that black students often are poorly served by this same system." We learn that he's sympathetic to the victims, but we get no sense that he will act with them against the system.

Several things emerge from these two books. First, many teachers who consider themselves liberal and decent people witness racism and incompetency all the time, and don't speak out against them. Yet they could, either as individuals or as members of teachers' organizations; and they must if they are to be respected by their students and not considered enemies. One wonders how hard Welsh fought for desegregation during that period from 1954 to 1977 and whether he has made an effort to do something about the teachers he considers beyond reform.

Welsh is hardly unusual in his reluctance to speak out, but why this reticence? The only excuse I have ever heard advanced, the one that keeps people like Albert Shanker in power, is that all teachers have common interests, and these interests concern the well-being of teachers, not students. The code of silence must be enforced to protect everyone against student or community complaint. But the fact is that a new agenda for teachers' organizations must be drawn up, one in which the advocacy of justice and competence is central. Teachers have to learn to bargain for educational power and assume responsibility for improving the schools, even if it means they will have to be accountable enough to fire some colleagues.

Both Welsh and Natkins allude to the cultural, linguistic, economic and emotional distances between themselves and their students. Yet neither gives any indication that they have made an effort to learn from those strangers they are hired to teach. If they are to be effective they must become different people themselves and not place the burden of class and cultural differences solely on the young. It is possible to learn enough about others to be of use to them. You don't have to be poor to teach poor children but you do have to understand the violence of poverty to be effective. You don't have to be black to teach black youngsters, but you do have to understand the rage that racism produces. All of this means understanding the way your students look at things and appreciating the difference between their view and yours. For example, to accuse students of lacking a sense of irony and satire is to express one's own prejudices; it is also a way of distancing oneself from them.

This distance is reinforced by the reluctance of high-school teachers to change their professional roles to meet the needs of their students. For years I have heard high-school teachers complain that they are not prepared to do the job of teaching reading. Welsh says that about his colleagues and admits it about himself. But why not learn how to teach basic reading skills if that's what the students need? It would not demean a high-school teacher to acquire the skills of an elementary-school teacher. Resistance to learning is often more a teacher problem than a student problem.

As long as students remain strangers to their teachers there will be school wars. Natkins was surrounded by aliens; Welsh keeps his distance from them. But it is the desire to know what is alien that makes teaching, as my grandfather used to say, a good job of work. And without that willingness to change one's self in order to serve one's students, our high schools will remain not merely alien but hostile planets. [

Alone in Africa

GEORGE PACKER

WHITES. *By Norman Rush. Alfred A. Knopf. 150 pp. $14.95.*

The flap copy of Norman Rush's new collection of stories, *Whites*, suggests that they depart from the apolitical conventions of contemporary American fiction. Set in independent Botswana, where Rush was a Peace Corps country director for five years, they occur, we are told, "at the intersections where whites and emerging Africa meet, . . . where ancient and modern and changing worlds come together with dizzying effect." From this, and from the book's blurbs and early reviews, I imagined something resembling the short fiction of Nadine Gordimer and V.S. Naipaul, stories about individual lives caught in, and inseparable from, the brutal history of our age.

The jacket misleads; *Whites* is not about "the complex relationship . . . between blacks and whites in Africa today." It is not really about blacks or Africa at all, though the setting may be enough to fool some readers. The author's title is accurate: most of the stories examine whites—Americans, English, Dutch and Canadians—whose lives amid hors d'oeuvres and adultery and hair spray are as close to life back home as they can possibly make them. It's true that Botswana is here on every page. Rush has a brilliant eye for landscape and a talent for singling out what is not just exotic but also banal and therefore real about Africa—"late afternoon light the color of glue." And yet the setting is basically irrelevant, landscape without figures. The only African characters to appear in these six stories are the young Batswana narrator of "Thieving" and the adolescent seductress in "Alone in Africa." The other Africans who pass through are no more than figments of the whites' fantasies or obsessions or irritations. If these stories were moved to Katmandu or Cleveland, a thousand details would have to change, the atmosphere and ironies would shift a little, but at least half of the stories would remain the same.

This is because Rush's subject is not blacks and whites in Africa, or even (Naipaul's theme) Westerners caught in the throes of the contemporary Third World. It is the moral and spiritual quandaries of middle-class foreigners who happen to be stuck out in Botswana. And this theme Rush handles with great wit and sympathy.

In "Official Americans," an American development worker is losing sleep and perhaps his sanity, because of the howling dogs of the Minister of Labor next door. An absurd nuisance gradua

George Packer is a writer who has served in the Peace Corps in Africa.

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y becomes a mortal threat. The Minis-er says peremptorily, "I must have my watchdogs"; the local police recom-nend meat laced with arsenic; Carl's econd wife, Lois, half his age and a ealth nut, sleeps soundly, crams him vith vitamins, and praises the drought's ffect on her sinuses. Desperate, Carl inally turns to an American woman vho has dabbled in local witchcraft, nd she arranges for him to undergo reatment with a witch doctor. But the *angoma* turns out to be a fake, and his ncisions on Carl's back are nearly fatal. n the end Carl gives up on his effort to vard off the creeping weariness in Africa; he knocks out his infection with eavy doses of neomycin, and in the rocess deafens himself in one ear. Now e can't hear the dogs, and it seems he vill stay in Botswana after all.

"Official Americans" is typical of he intricate structures and ironic hemes of the other stories. Rush is a naster at plot—something that has lmost disappeared from the razor-thin lices of life we nibble at in contem-orary short fiction—and these stories ll have a touch of O. Henry. In 'Bruns" a pacifist Dutch missionary ails to curb the violence of the local Bakorwa and their Boer masters until, n an act of purely personal vengeance gainst one of the Boers, he drowns imself in a watering trough and ironi-ally sets in motion "a real Götterdäm-nerung" of scandal and reform. As the tory's female anthropologist-narrator emarks, "Even very nice people find it ard to resist paradox."

Rush can't. His stories often end with n ironic inversion on a nearly farcical hain of events that exposes the self-eception his characters use to detach hemselves from any meaningful con-ection to other lives. They are naïvely ynical in a peculiarly American way, nd their lack of conviction haunts hem without initiating deep change. rank, the protagonist of "Alone in Africa," is alarmed at how easily he uccumbs to a Batswana girl while his vife, Ione, is away in Italy. The girl ex-oses Frank to the pious suspicions of is British neighbor Christie—a snoop-ng Jeremiah—and then rescues him. But the scare humiliates Frank, and at he end of the evening's farce he is faced vith the small hollow core at the center f his life.

Africa isn't more than a backdrop to ll this, but it's clear why the characters ind this backdrop appealing. Carl, the insomniac in "Official Americans," provides the explanation:

> It's because it isn't our country and we can't help what happens. We can offer people advice and we get paid for it. We get good vacations, we eat off the top of the food chain, we get free housing. Hey!, but we're not responsible for what happens if Africa goes to hell, *because we've done our best.*

Rush's eye is unsparing, but beneath the irony and near-slapstick plots there is also a kind of sad compassion.

Although the stories concern moral moments in his characters' lives, Rush, the esthetician, savors puns and surprises, and he enjoys a trick that intrudes on every story: the habit of stepping back like a solicitous stand-up comic to wink at the reader. "This is a wonderful story. . . . This is extraordinary!" the woman in "Instruments of Seduction" exclaims as the doctor she is seducing describes a menacing encounter with a South African refugee. "The story was a brilliant thing, a gem." Frank and Ione appear in several stories, and their re-entry is so subtle that Rush seems to be testing his readers' cleverness—if you don't get it, then part of the story is lost on you. The writing is too good to need these prompting nudges and self-satisfied winks. They indicate that Rush has his eye on something other than "the complex relationship . . . between blacks and whites in Africa today."

"Every writer," George Orwell claims in his essay on Dickens, "especially every novelist, has a 'message,' whether he admits it or not, and the minutest details of his work are influenced by it." Probably true, but some works of art are more easily given to messages than others. The situation of whites in independent Africa is charged with politics, and in spite of their evasions a message can be culled from the accumulated details of these stories: Simply put, any effort at change does more harm than good, though vanity and naïveté will delude us into trying. Bruns gets himself beaten up "by the very people he is trying to champion," before killing himself in revenge. The anthropologist-narrator can't carry out her study of native nutrition because "you go into the middle of nowhere and people are eating Simba chips and cornflakes and drinking Castle lager. The problem is Americans, partly." The African boy in "Thieving" finds that working for whites is a constant temptation to steal. And the

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Batswana themselves are corrupt (in "Bruns"), rejected by their own country (in "Thieving"). The vision—bathetic, not tragic—is of political futility. The stories generally have the point of view of the anthropologist, a self-described relativist who watches the demise of Bruns and the provincial town with a wan, detached smile.

In this sense *Whites* is saying something about "whites and blacks in modern Africa," but its point, except in "Bruns" and "Thieving," emerges on the periphery, in details that aren't essential to the heart of the story. After Carl explains the irresponsibility of whites in Africa, he goes on to say that he has discovered the meaning of his life. And not surprisingly, it has nothing to do with the explanation he's just given: "It's about women. Women are the meaning of my life." That is the basic gesture of *Whites*: a glance at the larger issue the situation raises, and then a return to the really important thing, the private matter that makes these lives no different from ones lived in San Francisco or on the Upper West Side.

The gesture has its risks. One story, "Near Pala," shows what happens when a writer introduces politics as a device and then loses his grip. Two English couples in a Land-Rover are driving across the bush. Nan and Gareth, unhappily married, argue about the Batswana—whether they are inherently good (Nan's position), or incompetent (Gareth's). These positions resolve into the extremes of sentimentality and cynicism. Gareth accuses, "We can't set a foot right if we're white, can we?" Nan retorts, "It's coming up a sermon—how criminal, how worthless the Batswana are." The arguments are obvious and static; the story's real concern, of course, is the marital tension, with a subtle focus on Nan's unwanted pregnancy. Near the end of their drive they come across three bushwomen with a baby, half-starved refugees from the drought, looking for water in an uninhabited stretch of desert. The bushwomen try to stop the Land-Rover, but Gareth refuses despite his wife's pleas. In desperation Nan throws the water bottle out of the window. Furious, Gareth slams on the brakes, and orders Nan to retrieve the bottle. The story might have been one of Rush's strongest. It fails because its politics turn into caricature. Gareth, who can't spare a drop of water for the drought-stricken women, becomes a monster, while al decency flows to Nan.

"Near Pala" is the only failure in the collection. Elsewhere Rush is superb a the kind of story an American in Africa probably has to write. There is some thing honest in his refusal to cross the frontier and take on Africa and Africans. One theme of *Whites* seems to be You know what you are. A more "political" collection might have appeared ambitious and sounded only hollow. □

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X-523

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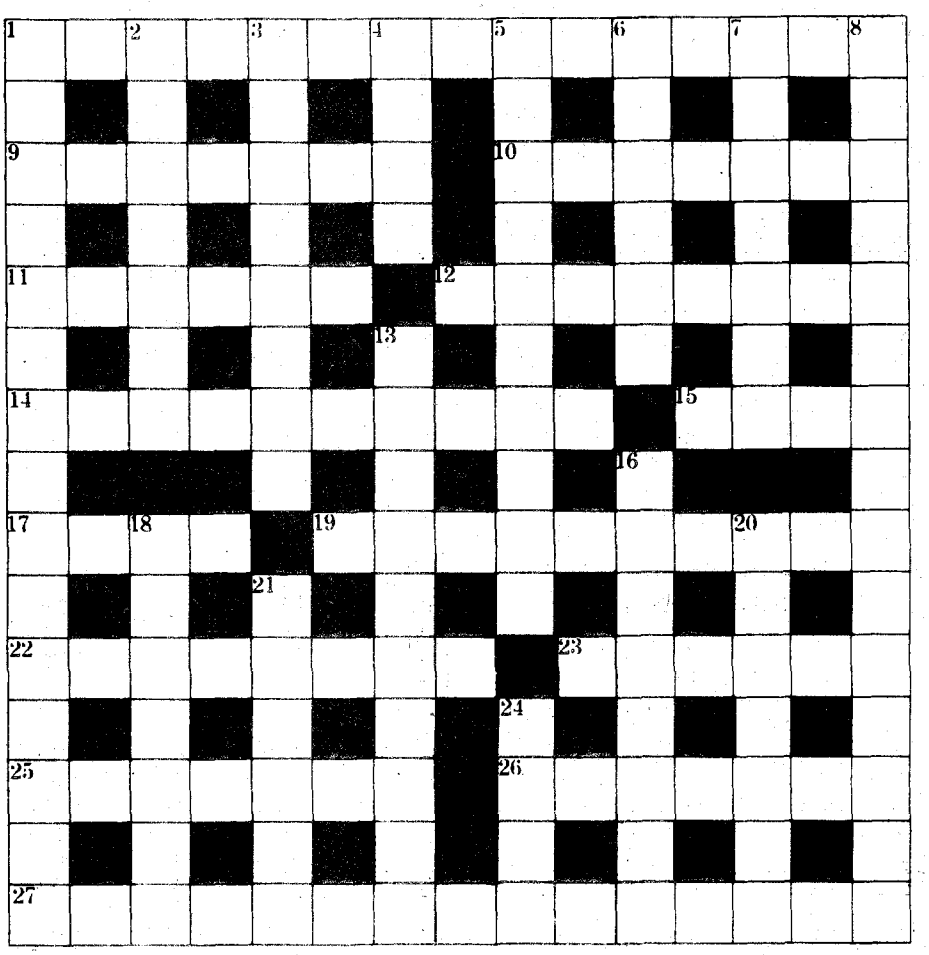
FRANK W. LEWIS



ACROSS

1 Certainly not covert warfare, but a sneak attack might. (4,11)
9 Not necessarily an oriental famous for making shooting people a popular pastime. (7)
10 What the Scot might say when cheese is around—or a form of breadstuff. (7)
11 From first to last, a meadow shrub. (6)
12 Hutchins was one to make money in ore refinement. (8)
14 A single 24-hour period in which to pay for parking tickets? (Butterfly wanted it.) (3,4,3)
15 What the married man had to say with a number of such as Buddha? (4)
17 What might help with a production of the opera? (4)
19 A fair judge should be, as a precaution. (4,2,4)
22 Why a note gets altered might describe what is coming. (2,3,3)
23 Galen's field loses one quarter of the classic family. (6)
25 Three-quarters of an hour, and the noise one made was amazing! (7)
26 Study what the coach might give and commit something to the agent. (7)
27 It might be considered a dangerous gamble for Ivan, but one doubts if he could go to the equivalent of Las Vegas for it. (7,8)

DOWN

1 Obvious two-direction traffic permits you to go so, with some latitude. (3,3,2,7)
2 Leavens the ingredients, but you take away freedom of action to do so. (7)
3 Your opponents might consider the victory sewed up if you are. (6,2)
4 Go down in the kitchen, perhaps, but look out for skin trouble! (4)
5 Where to find what might be state? (It's just not done.) (2,3,5)
6 Portrayed by Dostoyevski's character? (Sherwood's cast should have been delighted by it! (6)
7 What frequently follows the company name gets tied to it, in a way—and one might get stirred up by it. (7)
8 Does one take the pledge to do so? (Damn everything! It could be a nice age to follow!) (5,10)
13 Shakespeare considered such just a bubble—and are put into a sort of it. (10)
16 Such regions might be associated with Dante. (8)
18 You might get rousted out this way, if you have to follow them. (7)
20 Its main trouble? One believes everything has a natural life! (7)
21 Something like a diamond in one? More than one, when it comes to the stars! (6)
24 Just a faint voice in the chorus? (4)

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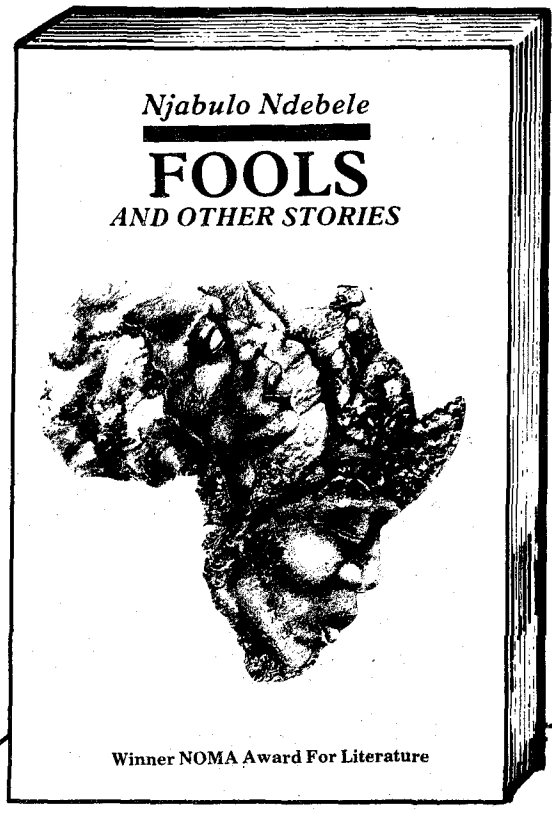

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